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ABSTRACT

The theme of this issue of the "Connecticut English Journal" is poetry instruction. Numerous ideas, examples, programs, and resources are offered to help students and teachers learn to read, analyze, write, and enjoy poems. The 28 articles and poems provide interpretations of what poetry is, ideas for publishing student writing, strategies for writing poetry, and techniques for teaching poetry to young children and junior and senior high school students. Representative poetry anthologies and bibliographies of poetry materials for students and teachers are also listed. (RL)

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POETRY: READING, WRITING, AND ANALYZING IT

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PREFACE

> I have never liked poetry and even
> hate to deal with it in teaching....

I used to think English teachers were lovers of literature, and that automatically included poetry. But a lot of us don't enjoy poetry. Maybe it's due partly to what our teachers did with poems. The teacher from Winsted, CT., who wrote the statement at the beginning of this page explains:

> I remember my sense of awe in high school when the teacher came up with all these symbols, meanings and abstract ideas about a poem which we had read. I felt myself relegated to the role of an intellectual midget in regard to poetry and grew to fear the yearly section on studying poetry.
>
> I guess this experience has ruined me forever, for even now I shy away from poetry in both my classes and in my own reading....

Perhaps it is wise for us to stay away from teaching things we don't feel comfortable with. I hope, though, that new experiences can make poetry less frightening, more enlightening, more enjoyable. For you readers who have not enjoyed reading or teaching poetry but must teach it anyway, this issue provides numerous ideas, examples, programs, and resources for helping students (and perhaps you) to read, analyze, and write poems. Experienced, successful teachers of poetry will find several creative ideas for further enlivening your classrooms, and you will appreciate the informative bibliographies of poetry collections that have been successfully used with students from elementary grades through high school. In addition, everyone will relish the insights presented by several professional as well as high school poets. I hope these writers will help make poetry less fear-inducing and more enjoyable for us and our students.

Helping to make this issue possible, in addition to the authors of the articles and the reviewers of new paperbacks for teenagers and pre-teens, were Lynn Yovina for typing the reviews, Sandy Rich, Nancy Kendzior, and Lynn Manizza from the CCSC Graphics Department for the titles, and Ronni Danna who continues cheerfully to turn out accurately typed copy for a third straight year. My special thanks to them.

Donald Gallo

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Poetry in the English Class

Thomas G. Devine

The place of poetry in the classroom, as indeed in our society generally, is paradoxical. In America, at least for the past few years, poetry is not a public matter: few, if any, poets can actually earn a livelihood as poets pure-and-simple; the media rarely, if ever, devote precious space to it; publishers avoid it; dinner table conversation hardly rings with talk of poets and their doings. Yet, one finds almost daily reference to "two roads diverged in a woods" or "miles to go before I sleep," everyone seems to know who murdered sleep and what it means when ladies do protest too much, the humblest paperback bookstore regularly stocks a set of shelves marked "Poetry" and piles Rod McKuen books in eye-catching displays. And, surprisingly, a number of friends and acquaintances can be discovered who know, from memory (and not necessarily childhood), lines and verses from Longfellow to Yeats to Auden. Most surprisingly of all, a number of the same can be discovered (if the searcher penetrates a little) to have actually written "something of their own."

The same paradoxical situation, as almost every teacher knows, is to be found in the classroom. Students regularly, insistently, agonizingly groan when a poetry lesson is announced. When asked, they usually rank poetry with sentence diagramming as one of the least attractive aspects of the English program. And yet, as more than a few teachers can testify, these are the same students who show delight in certain classroom moments when poetry does touch some naked nerve, does cut through the protecting calluses students have developed around their psyches, does furnish the stuff of memories. And it is these same students, surely, who, like their parents and older brothers and sisters, know about the diverging roads and Gertrude's protestations, and who buy those paperback books in the poetry section, who have hidden within them special lines and stanzas of great and not-so-great poets and, within notebooks and bureau drawers, keep some lines and stanzas of their own.

Recognizing, then, the paradox, can teachers treat the subject "Poetry" in such a way that they can strengthen and further develop the interest (and love) that is inherent in students while diminishing the negative coloration that seems too often to surround poetry in the English class? Can lessons and units be fashioned in a way that will not "turn kids off" but rather stimulate, pique, fertilize what seems to be within them? Can the English class be a place where young people have chances (which they will not necessarily have elsewhere) to explore their

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own "secret places," to measure their own deepest and least understood feelings and ideas against those of fellow human beings who happen to be poets, to sharpen and shape the anfractuous parts of themselves, to, perhaps, learn to shape language, feelings, and ideas in poetry themselves?

The suggestions presented here are derived from the collective experience of many successful teachers of poetry. They were developed in their present form over a period of years by teachers participating in the summer workshops in English at Boston University. They should provide some guidance for other teachers who want to make students begin to see that poetry, in one form or another, is an integral part of the human condition. The suggestions are hardly based on "scientific research" (for who, after all has the temerity to test and measure the workings of the soul?). They may give, nevertheless, some common-sensical bases for designing lessons, units, and courses that make poetry more significant in the lives of students.

Suggestion #1: Select poems for study carefully. Most anthologists and compilers of literature textbooks are readers (presumably) of taste and discernment. There is, however, something about the "chemistry" of a class that deters complete and consistent success when poems for "teaching" are selected promiscuously from the standard classroom literature book. The chemistry involves the poem, the students (with all their varied backgrounds, individual experiences, predispositions, biases, and resulting singularities), and the teacher (with all his or her prejudices, experiential limitations, peculiarities). Students and teacher bring to the teaching moment differing expectations and predilections. For success, even comparative success, the chemistry has to be right. In planning for success, the teacher can do little to control what the students bring to the class within themselves on a given day and little but acknowledge what he or she brings to the confrontation. The teacher can, however, control the third element in this meeting--the poem itself.

It is somewhat disheartening to find teachers who do not exercise this control they have but who, uncritically, accept what their books give them for teaching. One recalls the teacher in a large, urban junior high school teaching "I wandered lonely as a cloud/That floats on high o'er vales and hills/When all at once I saw a crowd,/A host, of golden daffodils." The students, mostly boys, mostly black, were barely able to discern flowers from non-flowers, much less daffodils from geraniums; their concept of "dale and hill" rested on the asphalt rise in their bleak neighborhood playground. The poem, was simply, completely inappropriate for that class of boys, in that environment, at that moment in their (and their teacher's) time. It was, unfortunately, the next poem to be "studied" in the anthology.

There are at least three dimensions to the problem of selection that need to be examined by teachers:

First, students must "enjoy" the poem. Admittedly, "enjoy"

is a troublesome word. Can enjoyment go hand-in-hand with discomfort? With pain? With boredom? Probably, our understanding of enjoyment ought to include the troublesome realization that pleasure can be mingled (and often is) with fatigue, boredom, discomfort, anguish. Yet, some element of pleasure, however defined, seems necessary for the success of the teaching moment in the classroom. Certainly, within the comparatively structured environment of the classroom when students are meeting poetry at least somewhat formally for the first time, teachers should strive for poems that give immediate, or almost immediate, delight rather than poems which present unnecessary obscurities, unrelieved boredom, information that could as easily be presented in prose.

Second, the teacher should probably enjoy the poem. It is possible that students may have some kind of literary experience with a poem the teacher finds in the school anthology but, the teaching-learning situation being what it is, it surely is better if the one who guides students through their first reading of the poem obviously thinks well of the poem. Considering the vast riches available to the teacher, it seems clear that he or she should select a poem that he or she cares about, is moved by, thinks significant.

Third, the teacher must recognize the maturity level of the students. Enough research has been done in the area of young adult reading interests for teachers to know that twelve-year-old boys and girls are more apt to read about animals (and the girls, about horses, in particular) than seventeen-year-olds; that high school juniors are more inclined to read about mankind's search for ideals than seventh graders are. Yet, often a poem is chosen because it is a "great" poem (in the judgment of critics and anthologists) rather than because it seems appropriate for eighth graders, tenth graders, or advanced placement seniors.

Selection of poems for study in class is obviously crucial. Uncritical acceptance of material presented in someone else's anthology can lead to a bland classroom exercise; poems chosen carefully by an informed, sensitive teacher can stimulate classroom moments which are rich, satisfying, memorable, sometimes exciting.

Suggestion #2: <u>Help students see the meaning of the poem</u>. Certainly, some poems seem to be meaningless; they are verbal music pure-and-simple. The delightful English nonsense poems of the nineteenth century and the deliberate verbal sonorities of poets like Swinburne ought to be in the curriculum, but, generally speaking, most poems introduced in school should have some kind of meaning, and it is the primary purpose of the teacher in the classroom environment to help students see what the poet is trying to say.

A direct approach to meaning may occur, and frequently does, in a traditional lecture or semi-Socratic question-and-answer discussion in which the teacher knows in advance the direction

he or she wants the class to move and, often, the destination of the flow of discussion. Two examples of this direct approach to meaning are given here.

In teaching "My Last Duchess" by Robert Browning, the teacher asks such questions as: What is the significance of the poem's title? Who is the speaker? To whom is he speaking? What are they discussing? What is the purpose of the listener's visit? Once students have an idea of the setting and situation, the teacher tries to develop specific understandings about the poet's craft (in this case, recognizing the ways in which an author reveals character) by asking: What inferences do you draw about the Duchess? about her age? her personality? her beauty? What inferences do you draw about the Duke from his reference to his "gift of a nine-hundred-year-old name"? from his saying, "I choose never to stoop"? Why do you draw these inferences? What clues has the poet given to you?[1]

In helping students to get to the meaning of Yeats' "Sailing to Byzantium," Sauer sets out similar questions: What does the title suggest? To Byzantium implies sailing from somewhere. Where? What is the antecedent of "that" in the first line? What does the first stanza suggest about the climate and geography of the country which the speaker is leaving? What kind of place, on the other hand, was Byzantium? etc.[2]

Such an approach to meaning is, of course, valid and, in the hands of a skillful teacher, it can be enormously exciting. Students can have the pleasure of noting clues, significant word uses, the interplay of ideas, the fitting together of pieces; they can begin to see how a poet works, how language is fitted together for certain effects, how their own thoughts and feelings can be manipulated by the poet. The danger is that this approach, like all others, can be overdone and can lead to boredom and rejection of the poem and poetry in general.

Suggestion #3: Try a "brainstorming" approach to some poems. Not always, certainly, but with certain poems, at certain times, a group problem-solving session is valuable. With a poem which looks attractive and sounds appealing but whose meaning is not readily apparent, divide the larger class into groups of four, five, or six, and ask the smaller groups to suggest meanings and interpretations. Too often, students have been led to believe that the poet and the teacher are in league somehow and that the poem's meaning is only to be obtained from one of them. In such a situation, the reader--certainly as important as the poet if the poem is to come alive--is passive, an observer on the sidelines, lucky to be allowed in the sharing.

In "brainstorming" each individual reader admits initially to some befuddlement. The task facing his group is to somehow pool the individual reading efforts to come up with a valid interpretation based on the members' combined insights, questioning ability, and interpretive judgments. Rather than have the teacher simply share his idea of what the poem means (an idea

often derived, in turn, from his favorite teacher, professor, or critic), it makes for a more stimulating, if not exciting, class session to have the students bounce ideas off one another, try out fuzzy or daring opinions and hypotheses, gradually shape, in group give-and-take, a defensible interpretation. This approach, unlike that of the traditional take-it-from-me lecture or the all too often teacher-dominated, teacher-controlled Socratic question-and-answer session, tends to provide for maximum use of their own language in a setting that is anything but static.

Suggestion #4: Try "Acting Out." Another approach to poetry which involves students in more than a passive reading situation is "acting out." Here the teacher selects a poem which has three or more characters and an inherent dramatic situation ("Hunchback in the Park" but not "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night"; "My Last Duchess" but better the medieval ballad "The Two Sisters of Binorrie"). Again, the class is divided into smaller groups, enough students in each for the various roles. Students are given a definite time budget (fifteen or twenty minutes) and a problem to be solved: How can you "show" your poem to the class in a few minutes? As in the brainstorming approach, acting out involves, or should involve, everyone. A narrator may be required, a sound-effects expert, the actors, a chorus; sometimes students are needed to "act out" walls, trees, or other objects in the poem.[3]

Teachers who regularly have students act out poems have noted three highly positive characteristcis of this approach: students understand better (they are forced to think through the sequence of events, the motivation of characters, the setting, etc.); they remember more (months--years--later, individuals will recall playing a specific part in a poem that would otherwise have been forgotten); and they will enjoy more (better to stand up, move around, say something--anything, rather than sit passively ingesting the prepared lessons of the lecturer or waiting one's turn in the recitational round). As noted in relation to brainstorming, this approach to poetry is not for every poem, always, or for every class; it is a refreshing, and sometimes exciting, way to involve students in poetry.

Suggestion #5: Have students write. Many teachers for many years have had students write haiku, simple ballads, limericks, etc.; some teachers, with able classes, have assigned sonnet writing. However, there are a wider variety of effective approaches to poetry writing in class that are now available.

Some of the most effective have been developed by the young Canadian poet and teacher, Brian Powell.[4] Powell calls his structures "triggers." Four are presented here.

1. Sound-motion sequences. Students are asked to choose an object in motion, an event they have recently noted or experienced, a happening that piques them (e.g. the lunch line in the school cafeteria, getting off the school bus, a driving lesson, etc.) and then string together a handful of words that seem to them to sum up the selected topic. Two or three examples are given to students as "triggers":

A bird taking off:	lumbering, leaping, bounding. skipping, hop, off.
Roller coaster:	rolling, speeding, swerving, coasting, shuddering, stop.
Studying:	sharpening, sitting, shifting, sipping, sighing, slumping, sleeping.

Students are given no directions; the examples themselves, the only guides. When they ask: Do we have to have -ing words? or May we have more than five or six? or Does the last word have to be a short one? etc., they are told to write whatever they think sounds good and somehow captures the sight and feeling of the event. In a sharing session afterwards, the teacher accepts all contributions, avoiding, of course, negative criticisms.

2. Dylan Thomas Portraits. Here, again, the trigger is the set of examples the teacher provides, on the board or on ditto sheets. Students are asked to fill in the blank in the question: Did you ever see a _____?, and then write four lines of hyphenated description if they can. Two examples of this trigger are:

Did you ever see an otter?

Fierce-faced,
Fish-fanged,
Silvery-sided,
Mottled.

Did you ever see a school boy?

Shirt out-hanging,
Sox half-masted,
Messy-haired,
Homeworkless.

Again, there is no pressure for students to conform to the patterns given. They are merely "triggers" whose sole purpose is to get students to say something, possibly significant, in a more or less structured utterance. The results from the class are not analyzed, discussed, or criticized, simply read aloud and accepted.

3. Form Poem. Here students are given more structure than in other triggers. They are given the pattern below and asked to put words on each line which will present a more complete picture of whatever they decide to title their "poem." If possible, they are told, they should find words that rhyme at the end of each line as indicated. The form:

_____, _____, _____, A .

_____, _____, B .

_____, _____, _____, A .

_____, _____, B .

Powell gives an example of a "form poem" a sixth-grader did for him when he was an exchange teacher in Moscow:

Industry

Smoke, soot, smell, choke.
Flash, orange, black.
Steel, iron, coal, coke.
Truck, rails, track.

4. "Completed image poem." Students are told to write four sentences, each independent (with its own subject and predicate); the first three should treat one of the senses and the last be an "emotional response" to what has preceded. The form for the trigger, presented on the chalkboard to the class, might look this way:

Title

(line 1 - SIGHT) _____.

(line 2 - SOUND) _____.

(line 3 - SMELL) _____.

(line 4 - EMOTIONAL RESPONSE) _____.

An example, derived from classic Chinese poetry (where Powell first encountered this trigger) is:

Cool perfume of bamboo pervades my room.
Wild moonlight fills the whole courtyard.
The waterfowl on the riverbank call to one another.
I sit on my bed meditating through the long night.

(A "completed image poem" developed by a teacher working with Powell's ideas expresses his feelings on viewing Boston at night from the top of the Boston University Law-Education Building:

Lights streak endlessly down the tiny highways.
Distant and faint are the soundings of the horns and brakes.
The air feels cool and damp at this height.
The city seems manipulatable from the top of the tower.)

The values of this writing approach to poetry have been apparent to many teachers for years: students are involved in poetry in a far more direct and immediate way than they are when they simply sit in a classroom, passively, consuming the ideas of

the teacher; they begin to appreciate the process of creating with words more because they are doers themselves; and they tend to look at poets and poetry somewhat differently--sometimes more appreciatively, certainly less disparagingly.

Suggestion #6: Teach technical matters as the need arises. One still hears of teachers who present students with four-or five-(or more) page, single-spaced lists of poetic terms to be studied or memorized (or both). Possibly, some rare students may come to have a positive feeling for poetry by studying definitions of simile, onomatopoeia, mood, alliteration, etc., but it is doubtful. Certainly, knowledge of the English metric system enhances the (advanced) poetry-lover's enjoyment of "Sailing to Byzantium" or, even, Eliot's "Macavity, the Mystery Cat." The danger is that the intellectualizing, coming too soon, may stunt the growth of love.

The issue of how much theory and how much terminology the student needs to know is a difficult one but one which must be faced by each teacher. "If I force too much technical information on the class," the teacher must ask himself or herself, "do I stifle all interest in the poem? If I neglect all attention to form, to metrics, to nomenclature, do I deprive students of the chance to enjoy and appreciate at higher and higher levels?" One way of treating the problem is suggested by Sauer: focus on meaning, ask what the poet seems to be saying, then, after arriving at some agreement (it does not have to be unanimous) the class can go on to consider the diction, figures of speech, versification, stanza form, rhyme scheme, and stanza arrangement:

> These matters should not be discussed in isolation from one another or from meaning. The teacher's first responsibility is to help the class see how each of these parts supports, and is actually an inextricable part of, the others, how meter and rhyme and diction are appropriate to what the poet is saying.[5]

Suggestion #7: Make use of all media approaches in introducing a poem. With the exception of some 16th century and 20th century poems, poetry is meant to be sounded aloud. Some of the metaphysical poets and their followers in this century have relied on and exploited the subtle ambiguities that result from variant readings of certain phrases and lines; when the printed phrases can be sounded in two ways to result in two interpretations, tensions develop in the throat of the (silent) reader and these are planned for by the poet. Many of these same poets, in both centuries, also relied heavily on visual impact and arranged words in phrases, lines, and stanzas to deliberately form a picture, a symbol, or a structure of some sort. Most poetry, however, does not fall into this small category; the greatest number of poems--especially those one would knowingly choose for a secondary school class--are meant to be read aloud, to be heard. So, of all possible media approaches, certainly sound is essential in the poetry class.

How to let the sound ring out? The first recommendation must be, of course, the actual human voice, the most direct and immediate instrument for transforming that cold, black print into verbal music. Often classes are fortunate enough to have students who can read well, sensitively and knowingly, and, when such students are available, they should read aloud and read frequently. Even in classes where few or no individuals seem competent to treat language orally, teachers can make use of small and large choruses of voices--insuring maximum student participation while turning those graphemes into phonemes. The most available--and most trusted--instrument on a day-to-day basis, however, is the teacher's voice, and no teacher should shun the responsibility of learning to use it. For the tyro, this may mean a few hours of home preparation with a cassette recorder, but the reward, in terms of a career of successful teaching of poetry is worth the time spent in practice. All can improve, with time and effort, their own reading of poems for their own classes.

As an adjunct to the teacher's frequent reading aloud of poetry--but never as a substitute--there is, of course, a galaxy of fine phonograph recordings. Fortunately, school and public libraries today can furnish teachers with a rich array of recordings by actors and poets, recordings which can make the walls of any classroom vibrate to the magnificent sounds of English and American poets.

A whole arsenal of media instruments is available now to teachers to supplement and enrich their own readings. It is sad to imagine a class studying Yeats without experiencing the fine (and readily available) film "Yeats Country," made and distributed by the Irish Tourist Bureau. So much formal study of poets and poetry can be enlivened and enhanced by commercially-prepared films obtainable through local public and university film libraries. Teacher-made films and slide-tapes are harder to come by but still available to teachers who watch for them. (One excellent slide-type circulated informally for years in the Boston area; a teacher had juxtaposed Frost's reading of "Death of the Hired Man" with the teacher's own slides of Vermont and New Hampshire barns, apple trees, birches, porches, and people to make an exciting oral-visual experience of the poem for students). Even television is exploitable--in the best way--by the alert English teacher; Julie Harris' portrayal of Emily Dickinson as "The Belle of Amherst" has recently been shown on public TV.

Suggestion #8: Have poetry permeate the entire curriculum. Poetry is, at the one extreme, delicate and elusive, subtle and almost impossible to pin-down, at the other extreme, forceful and overwhelming, terrifying and awesome. To expect anyone, even the most experienced, committed poetry lover to live on poetry alone for a lengthy period of time is asking much, perhaps too much. Yet, one finds poetry units of two weeks, four weeks, or more. Most sensitive, caring readers of poetry would agree that it is probably better to have students meet poems under a variety of conditions, having class attention focused occasionally on one poem, sometimes on a few related poems, once in a while on one

type of poem or one period in the history of the art but having the riches spread throughout the year's work. Individual poems or poets can be related to other poems, to stories, to novels, to film, to other aspects of the total English curriculum. Certainly the brainstorming approach, acting out, and poetry writing should be spread throughout the year so that no single approach bores or confuses students, causes resistance or even antagonism to poetry.

An ideal climate for the development of appreciation and love would be one in which poetry is a living part of the daily-doings of the English class, in which poems are introduced through the teacher's reading, through films and records and choral readings, each day or week, in which students have frequent opportunities, spread over the entire year, to brainstorm, act out, write, and experience poetry in a variety of ways. If present practices seem to be edging out a neat rut, perhaps it is time to think of a diverging road.

FOOTNOTES

1. Thomas G. Devine, Achievement Through Reading, Boston: Ginn and Company, 1968.

2. Edwin Sauer, English in the Secondary School, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961.

3. Marilyn McCaffrey, The Development and Evaluation of an Oral-Dramatic Approach for the Teaching of Poetry, Doctoral Dissertation, Boston University, 1973.

4. Brian Powell, English Through Poetry Writing, Itaska, Illinois: Peacock Press, 1968.

5. Edwin Sauer, op. cit.

I Remember...

Sr. M. Kathleen Smith, D.M.

Way back when...when life was so uncomplicated, I wrote poetry. I had my life all figured out in junior high, so I wrote about it through poetry, and I thought it was really good. When I entered high school, my life needed a little more adjusting to, but still I wrote.

Our high school had an annual publication called Voices, an anthology and collection of students' writings, poetry, short stories, etc. The English department encouraged any student who wanted to, to submit their work for publication. I thought, "Here's my big chance!" I submitted six of my best poems. I could hardly wait until June to see my poems in black and white. When the booklet came out, I paid the two dollars and hurriedly scanned the table of contents. "That's funny," I thought. "My poems aren't in here." I chalked it up as maybe they really had such a big selection to choose from that they had a tough time deciding which ones to print. I continued to write, but with something nagging in the back of my head. "What if they don't like them?" It was a little harder to write what I really wanted to say.

The next year I submitted two of my best poems. (Or were they my best? I wasn't sure.) I bought the book in June and again my writings were not among the chosen. I began to question my writing ability. "Maybe I can't write," I thought. After all, the editors know good poetry when they see it."

My doubts carried me into my junior year and I stopped wondering if my poems were good enough for Voices, because I stopped writing them. When I bought the book for the third time, I didn't even glance at the table of contents, but I did read the selections. "So this is the cream of the crop?" I thought.

In my senior year I didn't buy the book.

Don't we as teachers do this to kids all the time? We select what we think is the best for exhibition. I feel every child's work is the best for him, if he thinks it is and if he is proud of it. I'll never forget how this incident affected and influenced my thinking, my creativity, my ability as a writer. Granted, I wasn't a Frost or a Dickinson or a Cummings, but I thought I was good and that's all that counts. Kids need to think they are good writers and that they can perform well. Yeah, they do.

I hope I remember all this the next time my class writes something.

Sister Kathleen Smith teaches first grade at St. Mary's School in Ware, MA.

Who Says Kids Hate Poetry?

Beverly Haley

Who says kids hate poetry? If that's so, then why do they love music? If that's so, then why do I hear kids saying, "Don't you have any more books of poetry around, Mrs. Haley?" If that's so, then why do I observe kids copiously copying into their notebooks the poetry I place around the classroom? If kids hate poetry, then why are the class discussions based on poems some of the liveliest and most highly participated in by the students?

If it's poetry you'd like to try with your classes--any classes, all classes--then do it! Sometimes to find out "where they are" in order to know where and how to begin, it helps to set a day when the kids bring to class the poetry they like. Run these poems off on dittos before the set day so students can look at the written words and forms as they listen to the sounds and rhythms. Students can talk about why they like these particular poems and/or song lyrics--meaning? rhythm? melody? imagery?

Next it's your turn to bring a couple of poems. Make it two poems (maybe three if they're very short" on the same topic such as love, springtime, death, young death, loneliness, war, joy, or whatever. The pair does not necessarily have to be one "good" poem and one "bad" poem, though certainly that is one possibility. The two poems may simply reflect two different points of view on the same topic. Because they are different points of view, they will take different forms, tones, meters, images, and raise different questions. Teaching poems (I dislike the word "teaching" here--"examining" or "appreciating" is more accurate) in pairs is to me the best possible way to help students get the most pleasure from poetry.

For a sample case, let's look at "'Paper Men to Air Hopes and Fears'" by Robert Francis and "Warning" by Larry Rubin:

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"Paper Men to Air Hopes and Fears"
by Robert Francis*

The first speaker said
Fear fire. Fear furnaces
Incinerators, the city dump
The faint scratch of match.

The second speaker said
Fear water. Fear drenching rain
Drizzle, oceans, puddles, a damp
Day and the flush toilet.

The third speaker said
Fear wind. And it needn't be
A hurricane. Drafts, open
Windows, electric fans.

The fourth speaker said
Fear knives. Fear any sharp
Thing, machine, shears
Scissors, lawnmowers.

The fifth speaker said
Hope. Hope for the best
A smooth folder in a steel file.

Warning
by Larry Rubin**

Disasters will strike. Despite the infinite
Precautions you may have taken, the day will come
When, numb-lipped in the dentist's chair perhaps,
You won't be able to put another nickel
In the meter, or when you suddenly discover
The transmission won't unlock into reverse.
And what will you do then--with everybody
Honking, and all the service trucks away
On call? Or your eye may stray into
The wrong column--common stocks, time-
Tables, taxes for your income bracket.
One little slip, and you may find
Yourself on the wrong train, making bad
Investments, questioned by a federal man,
Falsely accused even in a death
Because you left a funeral too soon.
Watch every step: you will not be so lucky
As barefoot birds, singing on the voltage lines.

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*"Paper Men to Air Hopes and Fears," Copyright (c) 1965, by Robert Francis, reprinted from ROBERT FRANCIS: COLLECTED POEMS, 1936-1976 (University of Massachusetts Press, 1976).

**"Warning," Copyright (c) by Larry Rubin. Reprinted from his volume LANCED IN LIGHT by permission of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

Some suggested questions to use for Francis's poem--these are just suggestions as you'll probably think of others and/or you may want to select only some of the questions in order to focus on only one or two aspects of the poem--include these:

What was the event witnessed?
Who is reporting the event?
Why does the title have quotation marks around it?
Who were the five speakers and to whom were they speaking?
What are the "hopes and fears" referred to in the title and how many of each are there?
Are the fears legitimate ones? Why or why not? For whom?
What kind of hope is "aired"? Evaluate it.
What irony can you find in the poem?
What metaphors are used? Discuss their effectiveness.
Can you point to ambiguities in the poem?
What effect does the parallel structure of the first two lines in each stanza create?
In what ways is the last stanza alike and different from the first four? What are the effects of this?
Which senses does the poem appeal to? Identify the specific words and phrases and the senses each appeals to.
Discuss, if you wish, the length of the lines, the verse divisions, caesuras, alliteration, consonance and assonance, meter.
Summarize what happens in the poem.
What is the topic of this poem? What does the author say about this topic?

Some questions for the second poem could include:

Who is the speaker in this poem? To whom is he speaking?
What is the poem's topic?
List the disasters predicted in the poem.
Discuss their "newsworthiness" or lack of it.
Look carefully at the last two lines. Discuss in what ways they are alike and different from the ones above. Note the similarity of the first three words of line 1 and the first three words of the next to the last line.
What is the overriding "warning" given by this poem?

Next, compare the two poems in as many aspects as it seems appropriate: form, line length and rhythm, tone, imagery, message, total impact.

When students look carefully at poems, the poetry takes on deeper, richer qualities. It becomes absorbed into the reader/listener's being. Language awareness and appreciation soar.

Other possibilities for pairing poems are "Unwanted" by Edward Field and "Nowhere Man" by John Lennon and Paul McCartney; "To Helen" by Edgar Allan Poe and John Frederick Nims' "Love Poem"; "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" by Dylan Thomas and E. E. Cummings' "Gee I like to Think of Dead." Try looking at A. E. Housman's "To An Athlete Dying Young" and then "Ex-

Basketball Player" by John Updike. Possibilities are limited only by time, imagination, and knowledge. Always popular selections of poetry with teenagers include all the Scholastic Book Services collections by Betsy Ryan (Search the Silence, Within You Without You, Love Poems), Stephen Dunning's Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle and Some Haystacks Don't Even Have Any Needle (Scott Foresman).

Another way to use poetry is to select a theme, then read a novel, an essay, a short story, and a poem which reveal that theme. Compare what each form is capable of doing and where each is limited. War or racial prejudice provide themes that have ample materials for selection from all forms of literature.

When you are focusing on poetry, look at poems for different things at different times--for images one time, for sound another, for message, for ambiguity, for form. Some days think about how each element enriches and is an integral part of the other. Marvel at the poem's "unfolding" quality--the unexpected yet inevitable twist at its closing.

You don't have to do a poetry unit--you don't have to do poetry. Do poetry because it's beautiful and it's fun. Make poetry exciting. Make it live. Make it vital to being a human being. Use poetry as a reward, for a "break" from something grueling like writing a research paper or grinding out paragraphs (perfect timing for some concrete poetry or form poetry writing). Read a little poem at the very beginning or end of the class period for some sparkle. You don't have to comment on it. Simply listen and enjoy and reflect. Gradually increase the level of complexity of the poems you use to keep the challenge, excitement, appreciation, and sensitivity to the wonders of language growing.

Kids hate poetry? I'm not a gambler--but I'll make a bet on that!

Poetry the Student-Centered Way

John F. Sutton

Many students dislike poetry. This antipathy, I believe, is often the simple result of their not having been exposed to enough kinds of poems. If we give them the chance to sample even a slice of the variety of works which we call "poems," how can students possibly not find some that turn them on? I am convinced that once students are introduced to a wide range of poems their aversion to poetry decreases markedly. More often than not, it disappears altogether!

How can a teacher so involve students in the process of exploring poetry that they come to enjoy and understand it? Certainly not through a rigorous, structured approach which stresses such technical aspects of poetry as metrics and figures of speech. Why not try a student-centered approach? Instead of assigning students specific poems to read, make them responsible for finding the poems to be shared in class. Have them browse through the class poetry text--or, better still, through the class poetry library (suggested below)--to find poems they like. On given days, for example, students bring to class, share, and discuss

poems in which rhythm is important

poems which tell stories

descriptive poems

"people" poems

"idea" poems

funny poems

"shape" poems

poems on a given theme (love, death, nature, travel)

poems which have personal significance

poems in which metaphor is important

poems whose meaning is not readily apparent

pairs of poems which fit together because of similarity or contrast

The teacher can easily extend the list and adapt it to the abilities and interests of the students. He or she can introduce technical aspects as the class needs a vocabulary to discuss the poems. By limiting a given day's poems to one "concept," the teacher focuses attention on a specific kind of poem or on a

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John Sutton is Coordinator of English K-12 for the Darien (CT) Public Schools and a member of the Executive Board of CCTE.

particular aspect of poetry. He or she can sequence these concepts according to increasing sophistication and subtlety. The resulting structure helps the teacher lead the students to induce the understandings about poetry which he or she wants them to believe.

The strongest rationale for this student-centered approach is that it gets students actively engaged in exploring the range of poetry, and in the process they gain greater familiarity with, understanding of, and above all, enjoyment in poetry. It works.

POETRY BOOKS THAT STUDENTS LIKE

Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle (Scott, Foresman)
Some Haystacks Don't Even Have Any Needle (Scott, Foresman)
Zero Makes Me Hungry (Scott, Foresman)
Mad, Sad & Glad (Scholastic)
Cavalcade of Poems (Scholastic)
Man in the Poetic Mode (McDougal, Littel)
Voices (Rand McNally)
Pictures That Storm Inside My Head (Avon)
Mindscapes (Dell)
Poetry Festival (Dell)
Sports Poems (Dell)
Sounds and Silences (Dell)
The Crystal Image (Dell)

PAPERBACK REVIEW

The Picture Life of Stevie Wonder by Audrey Edwards and Gary Wohl. Avon Camelot, 1978. unpaginated. 95¢.

Occasionally one might discover a small, simply written book so meaningful in scope that anyone might read it from cover to cover in twenty minutes. The Picture Life of Stevie Wonder is one such book. The clear narration buttressed with sensitive photography reveals the history of the song writer, producer, and performer. One witnesses the evolution of black recording studios and Wonder's philosophy of music and life, with photographs lending glimpses into Stevie Wonder's world. Between the audience and the man are the worlds and the music. The Picture Life of Stevie Wonder offers inspiration and satisfaction, especially for poor readers. (Among others in this new "picture life" series is The Picture Life of Muhammad Ali, which kids are sure to like as well.)

Reviewed by Deborah Britzman, Weaver High School, Hartford, CT.

Prose, By Any Other Name

Joseph R. Calabro

In speaking of word number and the concentration of evocative language, if prose is as wide-beamed as a flashlight, then poetry has the power and fine-tuning of a laser. In the previous sentence, I've just used metaphor and simile to automatically dispense with yards of words and explicit meanings about the difference between prose and poetry. We educators and writers know that the conciseness of poetry results from the economic choice of words and images, given increased milage through simile and metaphor.

But can the beginning student poet grasp these distinctions easily? More often than not, the novice writer can not. Too much of his reading experience has been in prose. When asked to write a poem, the student will create a piece that is too word-heavy, a listing of sentences that stands for a poem in his mind but is literally--prose by any other name.

How can the teacher encourage the student to trim his poetry to needle sharpness, without losing meaning and emotions in the piece? Fortunately, a great deal of student poetry deals with the writer's deepest emotions. Because the student cannot hide himself behind the characters and plot machinations of a prose piece of fiction, he is more likely to express himself openly in a poem. Years of listening to popular song lyrics has exposed students to this type of emotional revealing. This openess is excellent, but does have its drawbacks, if the writer saturates the reader with so many of his deepest feelings that he forgets to maintain an objective "writer's eye" to his work. The poem at this point becomes a stream of consciousness journal, lacking the subject distance that would make the poem important to others beyond the writer.

What the poetry teacher needs is a poetry writing activity that will introduce the student to word economy, simile, metaphor, and thought evocation, yet be short and simple enough for even the average pupil to master. I believe that the perfect activity is the writing of Japanese haiku.

The haiku is an art form, as ancient as air, through whose simplicity philosophers grasped the most profound meanings. A haiku is a three line poem of five syllables, seven syllables, and five syllables, respectively. Here is an example by a master of the form, Basho:

New moon in the sky
And on the earth the faintly
White flowers of wheat.

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The haiku, in its brevity, contains words that are suggestively expansive. Each part of the speech must be chosen not only to fit with the syllable scheme, but also to contribute to the overall philosophical insight of the poem, a term called renso by the Japanese. Within its seventeen syllables, the haiku expresses ideas or moods that might take the average student writer a page to convey. Visually speaking, where many pupils write poems in a rambling, "long shot" manner, the haiku form propels the reader directly from the general scene to an intense close-up of its subject.

But before work with the haiku (which literally means "beginning") can be started, students must loosen up their observational powers. Previous to the writing experience, students should read and discuss important, published poems in class, and be able to apply the elements of poetry observed in their writing. Next, invite the pupils to make a list, as a classroom activity, of ten very specific details of their surroundings. From this list, they should write a five line poem, using one description of their choice in each line, and underlining that selection. This simple poetry exercise would show the students how heavily their poetry relies on colorful description.

Next, mimeograph a few of the five line poems, distribute the copies, and ask the class to strike out with a pencil all the words they feel are not needed in each line. The teacher could prompt this by requesting some arbitrary, small number of words per line. Students at this point will begin to see that many words are excess baggage in their individual poems.

Simile and metaphor should be introduced at this step. For a metaphor activity, the students might complete the following sentences on their own, using the names of animals: My younger brother is a _____. Or, my best friend can be a _____ when she gets mad. The class could discuss the choices of certain animals for human behaviors. The teacher could also ask the students what colors certain emotions are. A derivation of this method, using comparison words, can be used to teach metaphor. Only after the student has written his own similes and metaphors should he be told what the process is called. Do not deprive the student of experiencing first and labeling only afterward. Be sure to have a good thesaurus on hand.

Have the students read some previously published haikus, and note to them the syllable scheme. Ask them now to write their own. If complaints rise up that "there is nothing to write about," try making your classroom an inspiring place to write in. I have found that New Yorker Magazine covers, tacked on the bulletin board, provide many ideas for new poets. Encourage the students to write about people and things outside the classroom, too. The field in back of the gym may inspire more poetry on a sunny afternoon than any school classroom.

Eventually, you may decide to have the students explore the idea of renso in a haiku. Refer to masters like Basho. Ask the

students how the last line of each haiku differs from the two preceding ones. What feelings or thoughts are they left with at the end of the haiku?

By combining haiku writing and activity learning in the teaching of poetry writing, students and we ourselves will gain a deeper appreciation of poetry as essential literature--colorful but important, simple yet thought inspiring, personal yet universal.

PAPERBACK REVIEW

The Genessee Queen, by Winifred Madison.
Dell, 1978. 226 pp. $1.25.

Monica Kroll considers Genessee Island, off the Vancouver coast, her temporary home until her violinist father comes to take the family home again to Berkeley. But four years is a long time to have waited since that night when her mother packed the two girls in the car and sped north. Although Josef Kroll's silence is inexplicable, Winifred Madison's treatment of mother's and daughter's reactions to the inevitable divorce is thoughtful, yet amusing enough to appeal to teenage readers. The book deals with self-delusion, the grim and pathetic hope that the past can be reconstructed. The climactic reunion, during Josef's concert engagement at the Genessee Festival, is a superb orchestration of two artistic and volatile personalities in conflict, each performing to outdo the other. Monica's hurt, then eventual awareness of herself and her parents as individuals with potentially satisfying futures, echoes other Young Adult themes. This novel is refreshingly different, however, thanks to Madison's rich references to the arts, so evident in her earlier books. The vivid setting of the Canadian island is the focus of the story, with Irina Kroll's mini crafts business dependent on the tourists. The transitory aspect of life on the island becomes obvious to Monica, with the ferry "Genessee Queen" her only link to the past and, ironically, to a new life. Teenagers will appreciate the upbeat emphasis on the future.

Reviewed by Sheila Klem, Canton (CT) High School.

Some Observations on Teaching Poetry to Junior High Students

Phillip T. Freemer

I can still remember the discussion my cooperating teacher had with me during my student teaching experience. It centered around the possible units I might teach during my internship. She had suggested a poetry unit of all things, and I, recovering rather feebly, had choked out an "I don't think so" reply. She definitely had given me cause for alarm.

When I began teaching at the junior high level, I made myself a promise that I would include poetry as part of my curriculum bag of tricks. Actually, it was a half-hearted promise at best. It more closely resembled a commitment to self-flagellation. I suppose I felt it would be "good for the teaching soul."

Now, eight traumatic years later, I can honestly say that half-hearted decision I made back then was a wise one. Over the past eight years I have attempted to deal with this "nemesis" called "poetry." My various attempts have, at times, proven both surprisingly successful as well as dismally disappointing. Nevertheless, I would like to share some of the observations I've made over the past several years.

1. Teacher enthusiasm is all important. This may appear to be a superfluous statement, but I think it needs to be made. Regardless of how you as an individual feel about poetry, you must be enthusiastic when presenting it to your junior high students. Don't brood over the assumption that they hate poetry. Rather, accept it as a given. Your unmitigated enthusiasm will catch them off guard. After all, they've never considered the possibility that someone might actually like the stuff.

2. Let them know you write poetry yourself. This is an absolute follow-up to number one. While you still have their thinking unbalanced with your overwhelming enthusiasm, share an example of your own poetry writing with them. What better testimony to what you've just been exuding enthusiastically over?

3. Begin your poetry unit with something painless. This may appear difficult for the novice and the sceptic. However, there are various approaches available. Limericks, Ogden Nash, "formula poems," a popular ballad, and song lyrics can all be effective starters.

4. Use "formula poetry" at the outset. By "formula poetry" I mean poems that have a definitive pattern for the student to

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follow. Examples are: haiku, limericks, pyramid poems, crossword poems, and septones, just to name a few. Depending on their backgrounds, most junior high students are afraid of poetry. It is something they seldom read, and, with a few exceptions, never write. "Formula poetry" gives them a pattern to follow, and it makes them feel more comfortable than an assignment to write a sonnet, or a ballad, or some other traditional form.

5. Throughout the year emphasize poems that have themes junior high students are interested in. Humor is always appropriate. Limericks can be an open door to other more serious kinds of poetry. Poems that deal with sports, loneliness, dreams, everyday objects, and with questions like "Who am I?" and "What will I become?" help students to realize that perhaps the world of poetry needn't be as alien as they had previously thought.

6. Relate the study of poetry to contemporary music. The one unifying force in the world of the junior high student seems to be his awareness of music. Capitalize on this by using the lyrics from contemporary songs as part of the study of poetry. There are usually a few ballads among the "top forty," and a study of these can lead to "The Highwayman," "Edward, Edward," and other standard fare.

7. When presenting poetry terms for study, use clear, precise examples. If you're going to stress poetic terminology such as simile, metaphor, rhyme scheme, stanza, etc., choose poems that have clear examples of these. Junior high students, even though they may know the definition of the various terms, have difficulty seeing poetic devices in use. They need practice, yes, but they also need clear examples to focus on at the beginning.

8. As students write poetry, have them make an anthology. This can serve several purposes. Most importantly, it gets students to share their poetry. If they know they are to include the poetry of several authors in their anthology, it quickly occurs to them that the authors most readily available are their peers. Initial reluctance usually gives way to some rather prolific sharing as the anthology takes shape. An added bonus is the possibility for illustration. Even students who can't draw can illustrate their poems by arranging them in various ways, using different colors of paper, ink, etc. This illustrative effort is indicative of their understanding of and response to poetry.

As I've said earlier, these attempts to deal with poetry at the junior high level have sometimes proven successful and sometimes not. I do feel, however, that the potential for success is there.

As a final observation I might add that poetry should not be something done in isolation only. Although there is nothing wrong with focusing on poetry as a unit, if students are to feel

that poetry really has a place in their world, it must be read and written and discussed throughout the year.

BOOKS FOR USE WITH STUDENTS

Ambrose, Amanda, ed. My Name is Black: An Anthology of Black Poets. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1973.

Bennett, George and Malloy, Paul, eds. Cavalcade of Poems. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1968.

Dunning, Stephen, et. al., eds. Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1966.

Lynn, Kenneth S., ed. Designs for Reading Poems. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1969.

_____. The Range of Literature: Poetry. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1969.

Malloy, Paul, ed. 100 Plus American Poems. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1970.

_____. Poetry U.S.A., New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1968.

BOOKS FOR TEACHERS TO USE

Corrigan, Ralph L., ed. "Approaches to Poetry." Connecticut English Journal, 3 (Fall, 1970).

Gallo, Donald, ed. "A Gaggle of Gimmicks." Connecticut English Journal, 9, (Spring, 1978).

Gray, Stephanie. Teaching Poetry Today. Portland: J. Weston Walch, 1976.

Lewis, Florence. Haiku. Portland: J. Weston Walch, 1977.

Poetry in Motion: Poetry Writing Cards. New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1978.

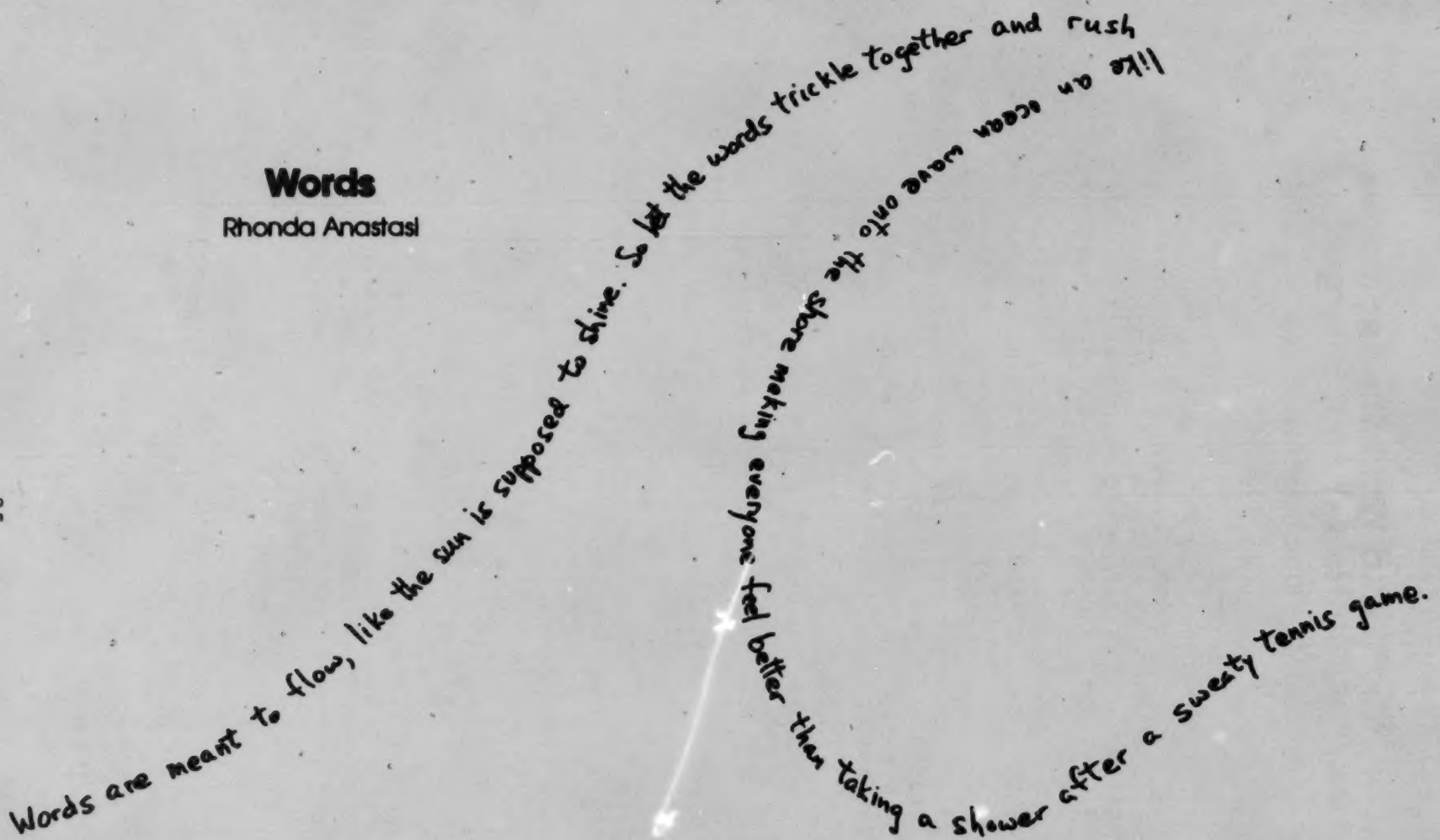
Senn, J. A. The Many Faces of Poetry. Middletown, CT: Xerox Corp., 1974.

Stacy, Clement. Write. Glenville, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1974.

Stanford, Gene and Smith, Marie. A Guidebook for Teaching Creative Writing. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1977.

Words

Rhonda Anastasi


Words are meant to flow, like the sun is supposed to shine. So let the words trickle together and rush like an ocean wave onto the shore making everyone feel better than taking a shower after a sweaty tennis game.

Rhonda Anastasi is a student at Central Connecticut State College.

What I Taught and What She Learned— An Inquiry Into How a Poet Emerged

Peter Gower and Kathleen McCracken

PG: She had sat at the front for three weeks and, unlike most grade 10 students, she had been silent. So I had great trouble with Kathleen's first work--a thick wad of poems, beautifully crafted. My writing course has never attempted to produce great novels or poems, nor even great writers or poets. Rather, I have designed and modified it to give the maximum opportunity to students to examine their thoughts and to put them into writing. I warn students that the room is like a laboratory where experiments may fail, but that unless those experiments are made, there can be no progress. I expect many failures in the first assignments especially, writers whose reaches seem to exceed their initial grasps. So the usual questions came to mind: who had written the poems for her? But discreet questioning suggested that they were her own writing.

KM: When I was about eleven years old I began to write about pieces of poetry which expressed some of the intense emotions I was experiencing at the time. Initially what I wrote was intended only for myself, though I suppose that unconsciously it was meant to be shared since I always made two copies.

Kathleen's subject matter was mature, her occasional use of rhyme and her rhythm was deft, and her word choice and imagery were precise. Evaluating, by my preconceived notions of what to expect in a class, was impossible. We simply began a dialogue, me writing in prose in response to her poetry.

I have always liked what I wrote, probably because I see each poem as a personal achievement, regardless of how good or bad it may be by any literary standards. As a result I continued to write and began to share some of my work with friends and the persons the poems were written for, such as the following written when I was fourteen years old.

Peter Gower teaches at Grey Highlands Secondary School in Flesherton, Ontario, Canada, and is engaged in graduate work in English curriculum in Toronto. Kathleen McCracken, a 17-year-old grade 13 student at Grey Highlands, has published two books of poems and received a 1978 Scholastic Writing Award Honorable Mention in Senior Poetry. The poems included in this article are copyright by Kathleen McCracken.

The Attic*

time slowly unwinds
opening memories
of a past
hidden deep
in the musty corners
of cherished cedar chests,
gently evoking recollections
of faded ties
and withered roses
each carefully laid away
for tomorrow.

in his tired eyes
the cobwebs and
pockets of dust
vanish,
hand carved rockers
and smoothly intertwined wicker
sway again
to the notes that danced
from the ivory keys
her hands could play so lightly.

quietly defying time
it lingers here
this magical land
of silent retrospects
yet as he slowly descends
the creaking stairs
to reality
it seems to whisper,
-hold tight to your box of tin types,
this time
will never come
again.

Kathleen wasn't surprised at what I liked and (even better) she wasn't disappointed at what I didn't like. She began to see how an editor (which is what I rapidly became) can help. And I wasn't the first who had responded to her writing.

It was in public school that I was first required to write poetry and short stories. I usually received high marks, and the teacher seemed impressed with what I wrote. I don't remember that this caused me to write in any greater quantity, but it did make me more aware of the act of writing, an exercise I discovered I liked.

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*from Reflections, Fredericton, N.B.: Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1978, copyright by Kathleen McCracken.

During her grade 9 year, Kathleen wrote a short story for her English teacher, Mrs. Edna Lukianchuk, who realized that it wasn't just worth high marks, but needed to be more seriously looked at. She persuaded Kathleen (without too much difficulty) to enroll in my writing class where she would find the discipline that any serious writer needs.

Above all else, the writing class gave me a reason to write. I was required to do some writing which was gathered together towards the end of the month to be given to Mr. Gower, who made comments. Knowing that I had to meet a deadline and that someone would be seriously considering what I had written, caused me to want to write, and I wrote in comparatively large quantities. Every night I would sit down at my typewriter for about an hour, either working on something already in progress, making a completely new poem, or just thinking.

The classes themselves were most useful to me in this first year. Much of the material we worked with, and the manner in which it was presented, was new to me, and I was very enthusiastic. I found that the course supplied me with skeletal ideas upon which I could expand in my own style. But most importantly the course made me realize that I could indeed write and that if I were willing to work I could possibly achieve something.

While writing exercises started Kathleen thinking, they obviously didn't supply all her needs. We also looked at films and books, not to criticize, but as springboards for imagination and as vicarious experiences. We would talk about our own and other writing that we liked. Such an approach will not work for every student, but it sparked Kathleen to action.

Tombstone*

this is a grave
of someone i do not know,
someone i do not want to know.

the weathered carving
says she had a husband
three sons
and was a Lamb of God.

it does not say
she preferred cherry soda,
read drugstore novels,
on Sunday afternoon,
had four lovers
and felt no guilt.

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*from Reflections, Fredericton, N.B.: Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1978, copyright by Kathleen McCracken.

i gave her these traits.

she has a name
i will forget
before we pass
the iron gates.

my stopping
left these roses
her earth-bed
failed to stifle.

I love books and I love to read. Though I enjoy all forms of literature, my preference is Canadian writing, more specifically, poetry. I seem to be most attracted by works which revolve around symbolism or theme, but can appreciate a character novel as well. I am also intrigued by legends and folklore and their offshoot, fantasy. I read as often as I can, simply for the pleasure of reading, but my time is often limited during the school year. What I read undoubtably has an effect upon my writing. If reading an historical novel, statements of my position concerning the situation will appear in my work. When I read a contemporary poet, their subject matter or style may begin to surface in what I write. But each of these phases endures only so long as I am involved with that particular book. Afterwards I feel they are incorporated into my own style, to be used when they will be proven effective.

Kathleen returned to the course for her grade 11 and 12 years also. I change the content each year so, despite the administration's views, she was not "repeating." In her grade 11 summer she wrote A Creative History of the Schools of Proton Township. She visited past pupils and the sites of the one-room schoolhouses, and wrote poems on her experiences. The book is now in all the county school libraries.

Epitaph

through the hollowness
of these
empty spaces
i can hear
children's voices
rising from
the grass
and dampened earth.

field stones lie
in rows
and form a box
each one a
still memory,

carved face
of the mind
whose fingers
grapple at my ankles.

i am clever
with my imaginings.
today i can
remake the place
and see their faces
pressing outward
on white windowpanes.

as we leave
wild flowers
brush my knees--
i am afraid
of their strong arms.

you glance
and where you see
there wavers
one thin buttercup.

it is a perfect song
it is a perfect epitaph.

Fiddlehead Books, the most important of Canada's small poetry presses, published some 40 of her poems in Reflections during her grade 12 year, and magazines have also started publishing her. What does Kathleen hope will happen to her writing in the future?

I can't really say that I hope my writing will do any one specific thing, because I don't expect it to. I can't look at my ability to write as a possession; rather I see it as a separate entity which has a life of its own, but can exert that life only through me. I would like to see my writing grow, lending itself to the various genres, but remaining centrally focussed on poetry, for it is in poetry that I hear my voice and the voice of the word speak in unison.

Stars fall
into my
brass bed
they hunger for
this valley
city
as I
for your
jewelled fingers
carving
wakefulness
of this
green dream.

I don't expect another Kathleen in my teaching career. And if one does come, then he/she will probably react differently to my methods. The course is not specifically a poetry course (and Kathleed did win two prose awards in Canada last year) but she usually reacted to my coaching and editing and suggestions in poetry. I will continue teaching my way, modifying almost weakly, convinced there is no one way to teach poetry, convinced that a teacher has to incite a student to write. Maybe that's a better name for the course: "Inciting exciting writing."

PAPERBACK REVIEW

The Solid Gold Kid by Norma Fox Mazer and Harry Mazer.
Dell Books, 1978. 219 pp. $1.25.

In their latest work, the Mazers expose the high school reader to a frightening world--kidnapping. The situation is made even more terrifying because the reader sees and experiences everything through the character of Derek Chapman, the 16-year-old son of a self-made millionaire. Four other high school students, in accepting the seemingly innocent gesture of a free ride, become entangled in the Chapman kidnapping. The five teenagers are beaten and verbally abused; they are given very little food, and are kept bound and gagged for days at a time. Their attempts at escape are constantly thwarted by the two sadistic kidnappers. Though fiction, The Solid Gold Kid forces the reader to observe this nightmare with eyes wide-open, not allowing him to find relief in thinking it's happening to someone else. Because of the narrative style, we are kidnapped as well. But the Mazers are not content with writing a gripping story of terror; their deeper purpose is to weave into this tension-filled account the theme of insidious prejudice. Derek Chapman, a realistic, sensitive, typical 16-year-old, is not Black, or Jewish, or Oriental. He is the son of a millionaire, and because of this is kidnapped, and, even more painfully, is ridiculed, ignored, and at times hated by the four other people kidnapped with him. Seeing individuals as who they are rather than as who we assume they are is the theme of The Solid Gold Kid, and therefore is worthwhile reading for any high school student regardless of where he or she might be on an imaginary social ladder.

Reviewed by Michael J. Valovcin, Seymour (CT) High School.

Projective Verse: Getting Students to Write Poetry

Darryl Le Duc

When faced with teaching a creative writing course, how many of us have asked ourselves, "How do you get high school students to write poetry?" I don't mean the few students who enjoy writing and present you on the first day of class with their portfolios of poems, asking for comments, but the typical students--the ones who cringe when you mention the word poetry. Should we require students to take their thoughts and fit them to traditional verse forms and conventional line, meter, and rhyme? I think not. It is these kinds of exercises that have turned students "sour" on poetry--exercises that encourage an understanding of form, maybe; but not creativity. Students have it hard enough sorting ideas and developing their thoughts so that ideas come out a poem, never mind taking these thoughts and tailoring them to a form that might well be incompatible. And therein lies my point--when teaching creative writing, creativity and ideas supercede form.

While I think the over-all approach should be expressive, I also see students needing direction and some structure. Most are beginning writers having little knowledge of poetic forms. And lacking the confidence that what they say is of importance, they often retreat to the safety of trite and cliche expressions. The result--bad poetry.

What I have found helpful in getting students to write poetry is an approach that is structured but doesn't use traditional verse forms as models. Instead, Projective Verse, also called Open Verse, serves as the model and basis for form. Introducing this method can be done in a variety of ways. After sharing some poems by poets like Charles Olsen, Denise Levertov, Robert Duncan, and Robert Creely to name a few, I discuss with the students some of the less abstract tenets of Projective Verse.

First, it's important to define the poem. As poet Charles Olsen states:

> A poem is energy transferred from where the poet got it...by way of the poem itself to, all the way over to, the reader.... Then the poem itself, must, at all points, be a high energy-construct.[1]

With this in mind, students are encouraged to explore their language, searching for specific words that reflect their ideas. In addition to emphasizing concise and precise expression of

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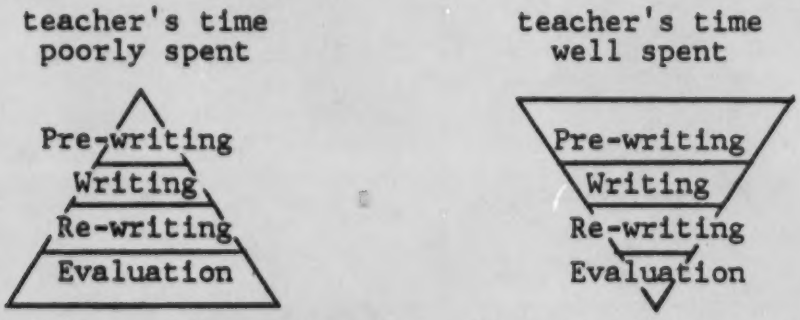
ideas, this approach also encourages analysis of the quality of words (sound, length, denotation, connotation), punctuation, and spatial arrangements, all in a creative context. As Denise Levertov emphasizes,

> ...every space and comma is a living part of the poem and has its function, just as every muscle and pore of the body has its function. And the way the lines are broken is a functioning part essential to the poem's life.[2]

Up to this point, many of the concerns are the same for those writing in traditional verse forms. However, it is the different view of form that lets students enter quickly into writing poems. That is: "Form is never more than an extension of content."[3] With students free to look inward, concentrating on the expression of their ideas, line, meter, and rhyme no longer assume their traditional importance. The concern is for the idea and expressing that idea and its energy into a poem. The way the poem is expressed, then, is its form. No longer tied to traditional, prescriptive verse forms, students are immersed in the creative process, with success a built-in feature.

As stated, I think using the principles of Projective Verse encourages students to write poetry. An equally important part of this approach, as should be with all writing, is placing attention on process. Helping students in the pre-writing stage is essential. Generating ideas through reading, music, discussion, as well as through sensory exercises contributes significantly to the success of the whole approach. These stages are commonly called pre-writing, writing, and re-writing. Donald Murray perhaps more accurately terms these stages as prevision, vision, and revision.[4] Too often teachers spend unproductive hours evaluating poor writing when more emphasis on the pre-writing/prevision stage might prove more cost efficient. The following schema illustrates my point.



This concept is an important one, and is fundamental to the success of this approach. Combine the principles of Projective Verse with a solid emphasis on the pre-writing stage and I think you have a winning combination.

At first the students are skeptical that Projective Verse is really poetry, and understandably so. A poem, they think, must

rhyme, and be orderly--in short, be a poem. However, it doesn't take long before they enjoy the fact that they are writing poetry--good poetry.

FOOTNOTES

1. Donald M. Allen, ed, The New American Poetry, New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1960, p. 387.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 412.

4. Donald M. Murray, "Internal Revision: A Process of Discovery," in Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell, eds., Research on Composing: Points of Departure, Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1978, p. 86.

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Between Wishes and Dreams, or The Poetry Lesson

James W. Penha

Anyway--
if you tell me that
you have never
could never
would
never will
never ever
write a poem
because it's this
and that
among other things
to want to try to
be able to
write a poem
(especially on the day when the death of your fourth
or fifth grandfather
has moved you from ring dings to yankee doodles
in his honor)
I will
frame your
glorious evasions,
inventions,
prepossessions,
and lies
and call you
poet.

This poem is copyrighted, 1978, by the author, James W. Penha, who is Assistant Dean of St. John's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, St. John's University, New York.

Fifteen and "Fifteen"

Richard Zahner

"Fifteen" by William Stafford should be a natural for tenth graders--just the poem to get them into poetry without even using the word "poetry" or evoking the negative response that we so often get when we do use it.

Teaching two classes of 15-year-olds--one group of average intelligence and another brighter than average--I asked them to write in a column ten words naming or describing things, ideas, feelings, actions they could associate with being fifteen. I got: music, movies, learning to drive, skipping school, basketball, snowball fights, smoking, drinking, babysitting, concerts, television, studying, swimming, immature, detention, talkative, partying, etc.

Then I asked that they choose two or three of their words and use each of these in a sentence showing how it related to fifteen.

Next, in groups of three or four they put some of their sentences together, adding and changing as they saw fit, to create statements about "fifteen" that had some continuity. Each student in the group was to be represented in the statement by at least one sentence. Some group results:

1. In the summer after ninth grade I was waiting
   for my birthday so I could take Driver's Ed.
   Now I'm taking Driver's Ed. but it's very
   boring and dull.
   I am waiting to drive up to the mountains and
   go skiing.

2. Weekends are the best time of the week because
   I'm never home.
   I go partying every weekend.
   I usually get in trouble with my parents for
   coming in late.

3. I can't wait to drive to the beach.
   Next summer I'm going to go fishing and water-
   skiiing with our boat.
   I can't wait to get my hunting license.
   I can't wait to be eighteen.

I collected these papers and with the bright class read them right away. I then passed out copies of "Fifteen," and after

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reading it with the students and making sure they understood the sequence of events in the poem, I asked them how it was similar to or different from their writing. They noted that it had a central character, like theirs, but told more of a story. It expressed longing and some discontent, which theirs did too. The bell ended the period before we got deeply into the poem. The word "poetry" had not been mentioned; in fact, I kept away from "poem" just to see what would happen; and only one student used the word, saying that "Fifteen" "looked like a poem."

On the whole, the poem had been received with warmth and friendliness. There was a suggestion of identification.

With the slower group there was less understanding, and I approached "overkill" or at least "overteach." Things went more slowly--so much so, in fact, that before I could read the student writing, the period was over. So I dittoed the student offerings and distributed them the next day, asking kids to put down one word for each group statement, which somehow summarized it. I got "weekend," "entertainment," "waiting," "driving," and "anxious," "boring," "outdoors," "freedom," etc. At this point we read "Fifteen," but with this group there was less patience, both with the poem and with the boy. The contrast between "thinking" and "feeling" was not clear to most of them; the analogy to a living creature such as a horse was more than they needed; and the boy's immobility in the end while the motorcyclist "roared away" was not as suggestive of their own thematic words--"waiting," "anxious," "freedom," etc.--to them as it was to me, though some of them noted the similarity.

Altogether, with this group the use of "Fifteen" as an approach to poetry was not as successful as I had expected it would be, or as it seemed to be with the other group. I think the reason is that "Fifteen" is an adult poem, with an older narrator who, when he looks at a 15-year-old, has the perspective of experience and the sense of proportion which the youth himself and my students in the less academic group do not have. They don't see, as I do, their own longing as a need to "roar away." They would not admit that they are "standing there, fifteen." They are too busy, too involved in their own living problems, to be able to step back and look at themselves. "Fifteen" is probably a good poem to come to when they can; but it isn't the natural for introducing poetry in the tenth grade class that it first appears to be.

Still, the technique of having students first reach into their own experience seems a good one to me, for it can help them respond to a poem with recognition and empathy.

And so I didn't give up. A week later I asked students to think of a time when they had been punished as children, and to write about it in some detail, telling, if they would, why they were punished, how, and how they felt about it at the time. They were surprisingly articulate on this subject, writing with considerable vigor and detail.

After reading a few of these papers to the students--and they listened well--I read with them Robert Hayden's "The Whipping." Now there was perspective; and the recognition was instant. Even the somewhat troublesome break at the colon, where the narrator reaches into his own past, became clear to them rapidly; and the idea in the final lines that the woman doing the whipping was in fact "avenged in part for lifelong hidings/she has had to bear" was understandable though strange for some students. I didn't have to ask kids if they liked the poem, for I was sure that many of them experienced it; and anyway, if any of them did "like" the poem, it would be in a different way than they "liked" their partying, a way which they may not be ready to talk about.

So--perhaps in teaching poetry, as in teaching fiction, we should turn to works which our students have the maturity and the perspective to be able to read with a recognition which will engender empathy and understanding.

FIFTEEN*

William Stafford

South of the bridge on Seventeenth
I found back of the willows one summer
day a motorcycle with engine running
as it lay on its side ticking over
slowly in the high grass. I was fifteen.

I admired all that pulsing gleam, the
shiny flanks, the demure headlights
fringed where it lay; I led it gently
to the road and stood with that
companion, ready and friendly. I was fifteen.

We could find the end of a road, meet
the sky on out Seventeenth. I thought about
hills and patting the handle got back a
confident opinion. On the bridge we indulged
a forward feeling, a tremble. I was fifteen.

Thinking, back farther in the grass I found
the owner, just coming to, where he had flipped
over the rail. He had blood on his hand, was pale--
I helped him walk to his machine. He ran his hand
over it, called me good man, roared away.

I stood there, fifteen.

---

*"Fifteen," by William Stafford, from Stories That Could Be True. (c) 1977 by Harper & Row.

Sharing Poetry With Young Children

Anthony R. Angelo and Marie-Jeanne Laurent

Many lifetime pleasures of the mind and the body are introduced to us early in life. The appreciation and love of reading ideally begin before a child enters school. The delight involved in physical skills such as swimming are realized by many young children. To be introduced to poetry and its refreshing qualities at a young age is natural and beneficial for child and teacher or parent alike!

We often delay such an encounter because we feel poets communicate sophisticated, complicated thoughts, too deep for the little child to grasp. This is erroneous on our part. Small children respond bodily, mentally, and emotionally with enthusiasm to all elements that "make up" poetry: rhythm, rhyme, moods, feelings, the sensation of the spoken word, the wonder at natural phenomena.

Fortunately for us as parents and teachers, and for our children, we have available today a wealth of excellent contemporary poetry specifically designed for young ears and minds. There is a tremendous variety of poetry for every interest: humorous verse, thoughtful narrative writing, poems that rhyme, many that do not, poems about animals, cities, problems, parents, science, famous people, feelings, frustrations, sisters and brothers, love, peace, war, separation, handicaps, success, violence, and tenderness.

Poets today, as perhaps always, are interested in the music of language--its lovely sounds and its realistic possibilities. They are concerned with moods and feelings--the emotions of human beings, the complexity in nature that awes, baffles, or calms mankind. They appreciate and comment on the humor they observe in life. All these emphases are related to a child's view of his environment!

The reading of poetry aloud, the stimulating oral discussions that may follow, the responses children may make in writing, all constitute a totally integrated approach to Language at the elementary level. This we desperately need at the present moment; we have ignored <u>too long</u> effective oral skills and meaningful writing experiences.

We are tempted to suggest a caution with respect to using poetry at this level. To dissect and over-analyze a verse or a

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whole poem is to destroy its unity of thoughts and feelings, its basic integrity as communication. To discuss every word, every image, every line is to flirt with boredom and rejection. Conversely, to read with understanding and enthusiasm, to encourage listening with openness, to discuss important thoughts and impressions, to suggest varied responses of language, art, music, drama is to invite an appreciation and love that may satisfy the child's present appetite for beauty and remain to comfort and stimulate him in future language contacts.

In a brief way, the remainder of this article deals with specific ways to present poetry to:

1) younger elementary age children
2) youngsters in the 9- to 11-year-old age bracket

With the initial encounters, humorous verse is especially fruitful and pleasing. The listening is fun, the discussion interesting and the responses to suggest to the children varied and agreeable. With the upper elementary children, thoughtful and provocative subjects may yield more challenging language activities.

One more word needs to be said with respect to technical language skills when children endeavor to respond creatively in writing. Spelling and mechanics need not be stressed in a "first copy." Paired proofreading and teacher help, after the initial individual writing has been completed, are good procedures.

POEM AND ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

I MET A MAN WITH THREE EYES*
by John Ciardi

I met a man that was very wise.
He had no hands, but he had three eyes,
One green, one yellow, and one red.
He had nothing at all but eyes in his head.
He looked at me and kept winking and winking
As if to say, "Guess what I'm thinking."

-- You're making it up! It isn't so!

-- Oh, yes it is. He is someone you know.
He lives on my street, and he can't talk
But he knows how to say STOP, GO, and WALK.
And that's all he says, all day and all night.

-- Oh, now I know! --MR. TRAFFIC LIGHT!

---

*From the book I MET A MAN by John Ciardi, published by Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston. Copyright (c) 1961 by John Ciardi.

I. Presentation

A. Read poem: "I Met a Man" by John Ciardi.
Emphasize: 1. rhyming: head - red
winking - thinking
wise - eyes
2. dialogue aspect--changing pitch of voice with "Oh! Now I know! Mr. Traffic Light!" "You're making it up!"

B. To see if children are comprehending hesitate before the last line and ask: "Who is this man with three eyes?"

II. Activities and Discussion

A. Listening for Rhymes; Responding to Rhymes
1. Invite children to stand or clap when they hear a second line rhyme with a first. Read through again to allow responding.
2. Have the poem on a large chart or overhead projector. Ask children to circle or "frame" rhymes on the ends of lines. Encourage children to read rhymes in context.

B. Listening to Recall Facts
1. Listen to the clues Mr. Ciardi gives us so we know what he's talking about.
2. Read again the entire two verses.
3. List their answers so they can read their facts:
"He has three eyes."
"He has three colors."
"The blinking winking
lights say STOP and GO."

C. Listening for Inferences
1. Why did Mr. Ciardi want to write this poem?
2. Elicit responses and list them.
"To remind us traffic light is important."
"To make us laugh with the 'riddle.'"
"To make us guess what he meant."

D. Listening to Think Creatively
1. If you were Mr. Traffic Light on a busy corner, what sounds would you hear?
2. Encourage many answers. List them briefly, stressing verbs.

People running.	Breaks squeaking.
People walking.	Police whistle blowing.
Children talking.	Rain falling.
Horns honking.	Wind blowing.

3. What people and vehicles need Mr. Traffic Light?

Bus drivers.	Delivery men.
Truck drivers.	People on bicycles.

Mailmen. Moving vans.
Motorcycles. Mopeds.

III. Vocabulary

During the oral dialogue with the children, the teacher suggests, elicits, and records ideas in short written phrases for two reasons:
a. Children see their spoken words visually in context.
b. They may need this vocabulary when they respond in writing.

IV. Possible Language Responses

A. Pre-Primary Level
1. Make a large traffic light with colored paper. Good activity for shapes, cutting, pasting, etc.
2. Pantomime a busy intersection. Need pedestrians, car drivers, bicycle drivers, police or safety patrol, etc.

B. Grade One
1. Draw yourself at a busy corner by the traffic light. Write a rhyme about yourself there. Give examples if it is helpful: All the sights,
I watch the lights.

C. Grade Two
1. Copy poem so each child can have one. Do choral reading with:
a. Narrator - first three lines
b. Boys - next three lines
c. Girls - seventh line stands alone
d. Boys - last verse
e. Girls - last line

D. Third Grade
1. Encourage children to try an original "I Met a Man" poem. Give suggestions, such as those from Ciardi's book: A man that lived in a box
A man that had no hat
A man that was singing a song
A man that was riding a bike

POEM AND ACTIVITIES FOR OLDER YOUNGSTERS

SOMETIMES*
by David McCord

The clouds are full of new blue sky
The water's full of sea'

---

*"Sometimes" from FOR ME TO SAY by David McCord. Copyright (c) 1970 by David McCord. Reprinted by permission of Little, Brown and Company.

The apples full of deep-dish pie,
And I am full of me.

My money's full of packets too,
My teeth are full of jaw;
The animals are full of zoo
The cole is full of slaw

How full things are of this or that,
The tea so full of spoon;
The wurst so very full of brat,
The shine brimful of moon.

I. Presentation (for Grades 4-5)

A. Read poem: "Sometimes" by David McCord. Have students look at in on the overhead or on a prepared ditto.
Emphasize: 1. different juxtaposition of words -
clouds full of sky
water full of sea
I am full of me
2. repetition of word, FULL and then brimful at the end.
3. humor in cole is full of slaw
wurst so very full of brat
It might need to be read more than once.

II. Discussion

A. Why were we smiling?
Funny way of wording.
Specific combinations in each line.
Some aesthetic, some ordinary
Some serious, some frivolous

B. What do you think are poet's intentions?
to amuse
to make serious observations like "I am full of me"
to get us to think about nature's bounty: sea, sky, moon

C. Do you like his relationships? Why?
new patterns and combinations

III. Vocabulary

A. Teacher should write down as many specific sensory words as possible during discussion.

B. Encourage and suggest difficult or different words such as:
1. combinations and juxtapositions
2. references
3. aesthetic phenomena

C. Synonyms
   1. Are there other words for "aesthetic?"
      ethereal
      beautiful
      lovely
      serious
      inspiring
   2. Are there other words for "frivolous?"
      ordinary
      trivial
      every-day
      foolish
      inconsequential
      superficial

D. What are examples of aesthetic phenomena?
   the moon
   the sea
   the sky
   the forest
   the dew
   the desert
   the surf
   Do they have to be huge things? What small things can you think of:
   a rose
   a tiny ladybug
   a pebble

E. When you look at nature's immensity, how do you feel?

small	over-powered
unimportant	over-whelmed
wondering	over-come
amazed	speechless
fearful	

F. In what other ways can we say nature is vast?

huge	extraordinary
immense	gigantic
tremendous	awesome
open	yawning (like a canyon)

G. Let's make a few interesting comparisons (say "figurative language" if you like) using both serious and humorous ideas.
   as still as a cold moonlight evening
   as clear as a newfound dewdrop
   as yummy as chocolate pudding
   as crooked as a contrary tooth

IV. Responses

A. Attempt to show poetic form of cinquain with the whole class. Encourage individual writing or "paired" efforts

later. Write something like the following:

MOON

Gigantic, distant
Gleaming, glistening, glowing
Wondering about its essence
Nightstar.

B. Encourage discovery of linear pattern of five lines.
   a. Line 1 - title
   b. Line 2 - two adjectives
   c. Line 3 - three verbs or action words
   d. Line 4 - four words that reflect feelings
   e. Line 5 - synonym for the title

C. Using this cinquain and all brainstorming words jotted on chart, suggest children write their choice of:
   1. haiku, cinquain, rhymed or free verse, limerick.
   2. specify no particular subject.

The original McCord poem, plus cinquain, should provoke enough imaginative responses.
(One choice might be to add another verse to Mr. McCord's two verses, trying to use his special style and unusual combinations.)

D. Use music such as Debussy's "La Mer" or "Moon River" from Breakfast at Tiffany's or the theme music from "Star Wars" or "Close Encounters." Preview by suggesting the following ideas:

Listen for: Where we are.
What do you see as you listen?
What moods did the composer have in mind to communicate?
Is the melody important? rhythms? instrumentation? repetition? volume?
Imagine yourself in the setting and write down descriptive words, phrases, thoughts that occur to you.

Discussion: How is this music full of sea? sky? moon?
Is it serious? or every-day? What makes you say that?
Are you excited as you listen, or calmed? Why?
Can you identify colors with use of different instruments?
What do different rhythms do to the listener's mood?
Does the piece have only one mood?

Suggest: Can you describe your reactions to the music in a few paragraphs using many of the words we spoke together and jotted down together?

(If class is not fluent or accustomed to writing, offer suggestions for beginning sentences such as:

1. The evening by the sea seemed calm and tranquil.
2. Sometimes looking at a river reminds me of someone I know.
3. Suddenly, the spaceship veered wildly and everyone was thrown to the opposite wall.
4. An eery bluish light in the evening sky grew larger and larger.)

PAPERBACK REVIEW

Rass by Bernice Rabe.
Bantam, 1978. 146 pp. $1.50.

"Not a lot of things of great magnitude happened on a sharecropper's farm in southeast Missouri in the late thirties," states the preface to Rass. With this introduction, Bernice Rabe conjures up visions of sappy romances of rural Americana like "The Waltons," yet Rass proves to be a tough-minded little novel that the majority of adolescent readers should enjoy. We watch Rass grow painfully from boy to man, recognizing that his father and mother, and all the other adults with whom he battles, "had been reared under a rigid system, and they were set in their ways." Rass, an adolescent free spirit, suffers greatly under his parents' discipline. The novel is filled with accounts of skirmishes between Rass and his parents. Many are humorous; some are traumatic. The novel's most outstanding feature is its depiction of the tension between Rass and his father, a man many readers will easily hate. Yet it is to Rabe's credit that she does not let Rass become consumed with bitterness. She also is perceptive enough not to weaken the novel with a closing burst of phony all-healing love between father and son. Instead, at the end of the novel Rass does a much more difficult thing--he understands his father. All readers who have ever hated a parent, or thought they did, will recognize the maturity of Rass' perception. Bernice Rabe's novel is as honest, discerning an account of the father/son relationship as a reader of adolescent fiction is likely to find.

Reviewed by Bill Bucklin, Litchfield (CT) High School.

Teaching Poetry Through Music and Dance

Claire Ashby-Davis and Denise Robinson

At the moment of birth, poetry was wed to music and dance. The various metric feet common to modern poetry had their origin in the rhythmic patterns of Greek choric dance. In the halls of Old English thanes, the scōp plucked the lute in four/four time while he chanted alliterative celebrations of the exploits of his masters. Through the centuries, both folk ballads and popular songs have attested to the perennial coupling of music with poetic lyric. Today, the disco "fever" of young Americans is evidence that music, lyrics, and dance are bound into a holistic experience that excites the human spirit. Is it any wonder then that the teaching of poetry without reference to music or dance would be a pedagogical error.

The question for an English teacher to answer is not, "Should I use music and dance with my teaching of poetry," but rather, "How should I combine music and dance with the teaching of poetry?" The purpose of this article is to provide one strategy for doing so. Concrete examples of lessons in sequence and materials to be used with the lessons will be given.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

1.0 Students will develop their ability to detect the main meaning of poetry (main idea and main tone).

2.0 Students will translate the main meaning (main idea and main tone) into dance movements which are:

2.1 first taught by the teacher--or other experts and

2.2 then devised by the students.

3.0 Students will write original poetry and develop associated poetic-dance-music patterns.

4.0 Students will offer critiques of the original poetry and the accompanying dance patterns of their fellow classmates,

4.1 indicating that they can detect the main idea and main tone of the original poetry;

4.2 indicating that they can detect the main idea and

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main tone of the dance movement related to the original poetry;

4.3 indicating that they can compare their comprehension of the main idea and main tone with the stated main idea and main tone offered by their classmates.

5.0 Students will share their findings concerning the relationships of poetry, music, and dance with others (fellow students in other classes; parents).

It should be clear from the terminal goal of the program (5.0) that the aim of all these objectives is to increase student interest in and enjoyment of poetry through a whole body approach to poetic meaning. This is to say, to accomplish the goals of the program, the students are expected to use their minds, senses, emotions, speech, and total body movement.

LESSON SEQUENCE RATIONALE

To implement the objectives, the teacher will give assistance to the students in taking meaning from print (Lessons 1-9); translating meaning taken from print into their own oral/written statements (Lessons 1-9); translating these oral and/or written statements into physical movement (Lessons 4-9); constructing their own meanings/feelings in the form of original poetry (Lessons 6-9); constructing poetic (dance-music) movements to communicate the same ideas/feelings as their original poetry (Lessons 7-9); offering critiques of the original poetry/dance movements of their classmates (Lessons 8-9); accepting the critiques of others (Lessons 8-9); and sharing their learnings with other students, teachers, and/or parents (Lesson 9).

Lesson 1

To assist students to derive meaning (main idea and main tone) communicated implicitly through print: inductive inference.

Materials: Teacher uses hand-drawn faces--cartoons, comic strips, pictures, and photographs from newspapers and magazines--to aid students to detect that facial expressions communicate an idea and/or a tone (feeling).

Lesson 2

To assist students to learn that body movement shown in printed materials communicates ideas/tone (feelings) that are not explicitly stated: inductive inference.

Materials: Teacher uses hand-drawn stick figures, cartoons, and comic strip characters in motion; pictures and photographs taken from newspapers and magazines to aid students to detect the "hidden" statement of idea and/or tone (feelings), which can be communicated through body movement.

Lesson 3

To assist students to see that printed poems, like the pictures and photographs studied in Lessons 1 and 2, suggest a "hidden" idea and/or tone (feelings).

Materials: Teacher selects poem with strong feeling and reference to movement to teach this concept.

Example: A B Poem

Blue Bottle Buzzer!
Where is the buzzer?
Somewhere in the house, of course,
zeeing his bumbling way,
trying to break a window pane,
with the beat of wing and body,
lured by the elusive blue outside.
Blue calling Blue,
but a barrier between!

I'll find you!

I'll free you,
wherever you are!
Keep buzzing, Blue Bottle Buzzer![1]

Possible Directions: Teacher reads poem and asks these questions:

What is the Blue Bottle Buzzer? Who is speaking in the poem? What are the feelings of the Blue Bottle Buzzer? What are the feelings of the person speaking in the poem? What were the hidden clues which told you the feelings of the Blue Bottle Buzzer? the person speaking?

Lesson 4

To assist students to see that poetic ideas and/or feelings can be translated into MOVEMENTS which also communicate the same ideas and/or feelings.

Materials: Teachers will select a poem with a strong, repeated message.

Example: Honey

Honey is heavy and syrupy sweet.
It runs through my hands very slowly.
I run in it, but it is hard to be neat.
Honey eyes and body only.[2]

Possible Directions: Teacher reads the poem. Class rereads the poem aloud with the teacher. Class tries to restate poem in their own terms. Teacher says: "Now that we have discussed the

meaning of the poem, let's pretend that this room is filled with honey. There is honey dripping from the ceiling, honey on the floor, and honey in mid-air. We can, through our remarkable bodies, now breathe honey. Let's move through this room filled with honey." After the experience, teacher asks class to discuss how this movement helps them to understand the meaning of the poem.

Lesson 5

To assist students to see that poetic ideas and/or feelings can be translated into MOVEMENT and MUSIC which help communicate the same ideas and feelings.

Materials: Teachers will select a poem with a strong, repeated message and with feeling. Teachers will also bring to class a number of records or tapes of musical selections ranging from fast to slow, from light to heavy, from soft to loud, etc.

Example:

Snow

Light, airy, breezy and soft today.
Cool to the touch------then nothing.
Hopping and skipping and melting away.
Quietly moving, then nothing.[3]

Possible Directions: Teacher reads the poem. The class rereads the poem aloud with the teacher. Class searches for meaning and feelings in the poem. Teacher says: "Now that we have discussed the poem 'Snow,' let us fill this room with snow. We will sit on the floor and feel the walls and ceiling disappear. There are no walls, no ceiling, no floor, just snow. There is snow all around us and still more snow coming down on top of us. Let us move around in the snow." After this experience, teacher asks the students to discuss their movements and feelings. Teacher selects records or tapes to play to accompany the movements. Class selects the record or tape that they think best relates to the poem and the movements.

Lesson 6

To reinforce concepts taught in Lessons 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Students will read a poem silently on their own and will then devise in class an original poetic movement and will choose music to accompany their movements.

Materials: Teacher distributes sheets of poems having strong feeling. Students will be asked to choose a favorite poem, devise a dance to match the meaning and feelings of the poem, and select from among the records or tapes in class the music which best fits the poem and the dance. Neither the teacher nor other students will be expected to offer a critique of this free exercise.

Example: A J Poem

Banner moth flagging a windowpane!
That
there's
ragtime!

But a swallowtail fanning the morning glories!

That's JAZZ!
Just
JAZZ![4]

Lesson 7

To allow students to apply all that has been learned in Lessons 1-6 by writing their own original poetry (usually no more than ten lines) and developing a dance movement related to it, plus a music selection that fits both the poem and the dance movement.

Materials: Students will be provided with paper, pencils, and a large selection of records or tapes.

Lesson 8

To assess student growth through:

1. Teacher evaluation of students' original poetry and accompanying dance and choice of music. Criteria: Are dance movements and music related to the main idea and main tone of the poem?

2. Teacher evaluation of students' criticisms of one another's work.

Materials: Students will make use of a teacher-made or student-made criteria chart for criticizing the poetry, music, and dance of their classmates.

Example: Criteria Chart

1. Listen to the poem read by _____.
2. I think the main idea of this poem is _____.
3. I think the main feelings in this poem are _____.
4. Watch the dance and listen to the music chosen by _____.
5. I think the dance had this meaning _____.
6. I think this dance had this feeling _____.

7. I think the music matched the meaning and feeling (YES)_____ (NO)_____.

8. The poet said the meaning of the poem was _____.

9. The poet said the feeling of the poem was _____.

10. I agree with the poet _____.

11. I disagree with the poet _____.

12. My reasons for my answer are _____

_____

_____.

Possible Directions: Using the criteria chart, students will criticize one another's poetry, dance, and music as in Items 1-7 on the chart. Then the student performer will orally state the intended main idea and main feeling. These will be noted on the Criteria Chart under Items 8 and 9. Follow-up discussion by the group will focus on answers to Items 10 - 12. Teacher will assess the poetry of each student and the accompanying dance and music for comprehension of main idea and feeling. She/he will rejoice in the beauty seen and heard!

Lesson 9

To enable students to share their learnings in a pleasurable event.

Mode of Instruction: Students will perfect their performances for a special assembly, inter-classroom, or parents' day program to demonstrate what students have learned about how poetry MEANS.

CODA

These lessons were actually taught in a junior high school in New York City, Community Intermediate School 229. We thought you would enjoy some of the results of these lessons.

For the poem, "Honey," the students said, "Movements should be heavy and slow. They should also be gooey, sticky and very sweet. 'Honey' is a poem which means slowness and a lot of quiet thoughts."

The students said that the poem "Snow" felt cold and soft. "The poem means quickness, coldness and quietness of snowflakes. Movements to accompany the poem should be quick, light, and very, very fast. The movements should have falls, skips and jumps."

Finally, here is the poem that a seventh grade student, Tracey McCrary, wrote and gave us permission to reproduce. The dance she used to accompany the poem had lively, jumpy movements, with quick turns, shakes, and a hands-on-hips movements.

Jazzy

Jazzy, joint, movin' to the beat.
Jumping, dancing, and moving your feet.
Playing around, all of a sudden guess who we meet?
The judge, the jury, and Big Moose, too.
Now we're angry and we don't know what to do.

FOOTNOTES

1. By Claire Ashby-Davis.
2. By Denise Robinson.
3. By Claire Ashby-Davis.
4. By Denise Robinson.

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Writing Your Own Stuff

William Provost

Write about your experiences. That is my advice to all students writing poetry. Using that advice, my students for the past ten years have enjoyed writing the following assignments.

My students have enjoyed taking some experience in their past and putting that experience in verse. That is the reminiscence poem. Another successful activity has been the writing of the mother's day or father's day poem. Writing a poem about Mom and Dad and presenting it to them on their days has brought much happiness to households. Another great activity is taking the Langston Hughes' poem, "Motto," and having students write their own mottos using Hughes' poem as a guideline.

One additional assignment works well at any time of the year. Have your students write cards of cheer and deliver these cards to local convalescent homes or pediatric wards of hospitals. The cards will bring happiness into the lives of those people so richly deserving of our care. Besides, the assignment will make you, the teacher, feel better too.

Mr. Provost teaches at Simsbury (CT.) High School.

Poetry Readers: Publishing Student Writing

Diane P. Shugert

There is a sense in which a writer does not exist unless his work is published. Even Thomas Gray's "mute inglorious Milton" exists for us only because Gray took the time and trouble to think about him, to record the thought, and to publish what had been recorded. Anyone who writes or who has worked closely with a writer knows that sense of satisfaction, that sense of making the unreal and ephemeral into something real and permanent, which is associated with seeing one's writing printed and distributed to the world.

No matter what we study in our classes, we tend to have students do a lot a writing. If we ourselves are writers, we get students to write poems like the poems we are reading, to re-create the forms we study. If we are critics, we get students to write criticism, to analyze the forms. Why not, then, take these writings a step further? Why not shape the topics a bit more, keeping an audience in mind and aiming at some specific format for publication?

As students prepare their writings for publication, they learn some things than cannot, I think, be taught in any other way. They learn to care for what they write and to revise, edit, and proofread it. They experience (rather than merely imagine) audience response. Above all, they come into being as writers; a part of their identities is defined as "Me, writer." We know about the adolescent search for self-definition, for an identity. We can help young adults to find that identity as writers and thereby to connect what they do in English class with the deepest needs of their own personalities.

If publication is to serve those needs for all of our students, however, we must revise a few of our ideas about it. We have to get away from the limits of the school literary magazine or the school newspaper. Only a few students can publish there, and we want <u>all</u> the students to publish. Furthermore, school publications retain some slight flavor or officialdom, of the assignment, of doing the right thing. We want to emphasize real audiences who might actually be pleased to read what our students have written. By doing so we help students to move from satisfying the teacher to communicating with the reader.

Here are two outlines of publishing projects. The first would take several weeks to carry out and might serve as a culminating project for a poetry criticism unit. The second is

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much shorter, almost a casual project, but it still reaches an audience and can have many of the advantages of longer projects without requiring so much time to complete.

CRITICAL ANTHOLOGY OF POETRY

Grades: 10-12

Topic: Make an anthology of eight or more poems--your own and others'--all on a single theme. (Maximum of two poems from records.) Write a foreword for the anthology explaining why you chose these poems and how each poem relates to the theme. Create a title for the anthology. You may illustrate it if you wish.

Audiences: The student himself. Or any person the student chooses. Or future classes. Save the anthologies to add to books kept in the classroom. (Student chooses which option.)

Publication format: Hand-bound book. Student chooses binding method appropriate to his interest and investment in project.

Procedures: Special lessons and materials will be needed on forewords, anthologies, and bindings. Class divided into editorial boards of five students. Each student's forword, choices, format must be critiqued by the other four. Have a publishing day when all completed books can be read and shared by whole class.

Other comments: It is assumed that students have been reading and writing poems and that there are many appropriate, professional poetry collections available in the classroom.

ONE LINERS

Grades: 7-9

Topic: What are some sayings about money? (A fool and his money are soon parted, etc. Elicit from class.) Let's make up some crazy--or very true--sayings about money. Perhaps some of them will be variations on well-known sayings. (Money is the root of all evil, but trees without roots bear no fruit.)

Audience: Customers of the local bank.

Publication format: 1) Dittoed or mimeographed individually on small pieces of paper along with author's name (maybe a crazy pen name) and class. 2) Or collected onto a single sheet folded into thirds with title and class on cover. 3) To be distributed to bank customers along with receipts and cash or in bank statements.

Procedures: Editorial work aimed at honing the sayings, deciding on title (for the collection), and proofreading.

Other comments: Bank might well be talked into paying for nice looking printing.

The following are brief suggestions concerning formats, topics, potential audiences, and funding and a few tips on getting students to do the necessary revisions. For more ideas see any of the materials published by the Poets in the Schools Programs (available from state Commissions on the Arts and from the National Council of Teachers of English) or The Whole Word Catalog (Teachers and Writers Collaborative, 186 West 4th St., New York, N.Y. 10014).

FORMATS

Short things:
- Supermarket grocery bags
- Small pieces of paper distributed
  1. with lunch in the cafeteria
  2. at the bank
  3. with report cards
  4. with office passes and tardy slips
  5. at the book fair
  6. under windshield wipers in the parking lot
  7. at sports events
  8. in unexpected places around the school
- Bumper stickers
- Post cards
- Backs/fronts of envelopes
- Book covers
- Insert pages for looseleaf notebooks
- Graffiti wall

Collections and longer things:
- Slips of paper in decorated envelopes
- Newsletter to class's parents (See David W. England, "Hearing from the Teacher When Nothing Is Wrong," English Journal, September 1977, p. 45.)
- Informal school or class newspaper (See Emily Strong, "Give Them a Reason To Write: Launching the Informal School Newspaper," English Journal, May 1977, pp. 37-40.)
- Index cards collected in boxes
- Hand-bound books
- Offset printed folders
- Dittoed booklets, stapled with print-shop covers

TOPICS

Short things:
- Original aphorisms
- Crazy "facts"
- Fortunes
- "Clean" graffiti
- Fictitious quotations
- Cliche and metaphor exercises
- Limericks
- Wacky definitions
- Short poems of all kinds
- Imaginative school rules

Longer things:
- Collections of any of the shorter things

Research reports on language in the community, folklore, etc. (See Foxfire series.)
Reviews of top 40 records, albums, movies, TV shows, books, magazines
Results of surveys to determine top 40, etc.
Reviews of school assignments
Biographies of community residents, family, school people, each other
Teen-age travel information
Reports and samples of any class activities
Single-copy anthologies with critical prefaces
Children's books

POTENTIAL AUDIENCES

Members of the class
Relatives of class members
The whole school
Younger children
Customers of a particular business
Another class in same school
Another class in another school
Another school
Citizens of the community
Just one person

MONEY

Publishing is not very expensive. $25-$100 goes a very long way.

Mini-grants. Possible sources: the school, parents' organizations, local merchant(s), arts council, charitable organization
Sales. Sell a few of the things for 25¢ or 50¢ a copy
Patron. If your class has written something that a merchant or hospital or the town office can really use, ask the user for enough money to cover costs.

REVISING TIPS

Publish everyone's work, but insist that work be revised until it's suitable.
Create student editorial boards. Give the boards fancy names and real responsibilities.
Ask members of the potential audience to comment and criticize before final printing.
Ask a variety of local experts (local printer, college teacher, teacher from another school, bank officer) to assist as guest editors.

Finally, let me return to the format used in the Critical Anthology of Poetry: the hand-bound, single copy book. This format is an especially valuable one because it permits each

student to publish very personal materials. It requires an audience of only one person; therefore the student can concentrate on communicating exactly what he or she wants to the one person who is the student's best audience. Love poems can be collected for lovers; poems on adolescent angst can be collected for parents; a whole class's work can be assembled for the library. In the hand-bound book, though, format is everything: the book when completed must look and feel like a book not a kindergarten construction paper project. The feel and look of a real book are accomplished by using a true bookbinding stitch and by adopting some of the techniques used by professional bookbinders. Adaptations of those techniques follow:

BASIC BOOKBINDING

All typing, writing and printing must be done in advance of binding. This means that the whole book must be planned and "printed" before assembling. To get some idea of spacing, "print" a dummy copy first.

Materials: sheets of paper (for text); 1 sheet of different paper--same size as text paper (for endpapers); cloth strip (for hinge) 1.5"-3" wide; cardboard pieces (for boards); adhesive paper, wrapping paper, or cloth (for covers); thread; needle; glue; waxed paper.

Preparing and sewing the signature: (Work with book open.)

1. Fold pages in half. Put one inside the other. End paper should be on outside. (This group of pages is called a signature.)
2. Crease pages to make a sharp, fine fold.
3. Cut strip of cloth for hinge 1"-1.5" shorter than fold of signature. Fold in half lengthwise, crease, and center on outside of signature fold.
4. Make holes (3 or 5 holes, depending on size of book) through signature and hinge at fold. Holes about 2" apart. First hole exactly in center. Second and third holes equidistant on either side of center hole.
5. Sewing three holes: 1st stitch: Insert needle with single thread through center hole from inside of signature to outside of hinge, leaving at least 4" thread "tail." 2nd stitch: Sew from outside hinge to inside signature through next hole. 3rd stitch: Bring thread along inner fold to hole on other side of center hole. Sew from inside to outside. 4th stitch: Sew through center hole again, this time from outside to inside. (See fig. 1)
6. Sewing five holes: (See fig. 2)

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

7. Firm up stitches. Tie ends so that long inner stitch is caught up and held in knot. Clip ends short.

8. Close book. Crease fold and press folded section under a weight for a bit.

Preparing and attaching the boards: (Work with book closed.)
1. Cut two pieces of cardboard. Each should be at least 1/4" longer than signature fold and at least 1/8" shorter than signature width.
2. Spread paste along one side of hinge. (From now on place waxed paper between signature and cover to protect signature from paste. Change waxed paper each time book is moved around.)
3. Place one board along hinge so board extends 1/8"-1/4" beyond top, bottom, and open side of signature. Hinge piece stays on inside of board.
4. Turn book over and repeat for other board.
5. Close book. Protect with waxed paper above, below, and within and place under weight until paste dries.

Covering spine: (Work with book closed.)
1. Use strip of cloth several inches longer than spine and wide enough to partially cover boards.
2. Apply paste to one board, lay spine covering on board, straighten, and press.
3. Wrap cloth around spine and repeat for other side.
4. Weight folded book until glue dries.
5. Trim end of spine covering to 3/4"-1" longer than spine. Slit lengthwise, and paste to inside of boards at top and bottom.

Covering boards:
1. Use wrapping paper, adheshive paper, or cloth.
2. Cut covering large enough to overlap spine covering and to extend 1/2" at top, bottom, and front of each board.
3. Spread paste on outside of one board. Press covering onto board, overlapping spine covering slightly. (If cloth is used for covering, a selvage looks neater for overlap.) Smooth cover carefully.
4. Fold edges over board. Paste down on inside of board. (Miter corners.)
5. Repeat for other side.
6. Weight and dry.

Endpapers: Paste endpapers to inside of boards, covering everything up.

SIMPLIFICATIONS

These result in a less attractive and less usable book.

1. Use attractive material for the boards. Stop after attaching boards. (A heavyweight greeting card could be used.)
2. Use staples rather than stitches in center fold.
3. For hinge use a piece of cloth large enough to serve as a cover.
4. Do not fold sheets. Use cloth or flexible plastic rather

than boards. Punch holes along side of flat, full sheets and through covering material. Stitch with yarn or shoelaces, using the basic binding stitches. (This method looks particularly good for children's books, and it has the advantage of permitting the number of pages to be determined without much planning.)

ELABORATIONS

1. When book is completed, cover may be lettered, pictures and designs added.
2. It is possible to sew several signatures to one hinge. This doesn't work very well, but it permits more text to be bound.
3. Cover may be extended to be much larger than pages.

PAPERBACK REVIEW

But I'm Ready to Go, by Louise Albert.
Dell, 1978. 220 pp. $1.25.

I want to be smart. And special. I'll tell you a secret, Lisa. I think I am special. But no one except me knows it.

Judy Miller's diary entry summarizes the theme of But I'm Ready to Go, the story of a 14-year-old girl with minimal brain damage. Life is a series of problems for Judy. Her motor co-ordination is poor and she cannot concentrate well enough to follow normal classroom discussions, or even her family's dinner conversations. Life at home is made more difficult by her sister's and brother's resentment of the special consideration which she receives. Most of all she fears that she will always be labeled as dumb, as a Nobody. In an effort to become Somebody Special, Judy embarks upon a secret plan to be a professional singer. She practices for months, but her fantasy of being "discovered" collides with reality when she cannot obtain an audition. Her failure leads to her first genuine contact with her sister Emily. The story, told through the entries in Judy's diary, effectively presents her bewilderment at life and her mental turmoil over being different. The other characters are revealed only through their interaction with Judy, which she often misinterprets. Because the theme transcends the experience of the handicapped child to include the problems with self-image endured by all young teens, the book should appeal to junior high readers as well as to families and teachers who must cope with disabled children.

Reviewed by Jacqueline M. Farrell, Schaghticoke Middle School, New Milford, CT.

An Encounter Between Teacher-Poet and Student-Poet

D.W. Donzella

I first became acquainted with Elizabeth Torphy's work when she applied for admission into the creative writing class at Interarts, the Bridgeport area high school arts program. I found her work emotionally powerful and sincere. Her imagery would at times cut through the surface of her poems into much deeper territories of statement and experience. Her poems were attempts to understand and evaluate the events of her life and for this I respected them.

I began my work with her by trying to make her aware of those images and ideas in her work which were trite or overly sentimental. In editing her work I isolated what I felt was of substance and cut what seemed to have only been part of the process she had used to arrive at her statements and conclusions. For example there might be several lines or even a stanza at the beginning of a poem which had perhaps served her as a point of departure, a way into the poem, but which had little to offer the reader. I also told her that as far as I was concerned she could only write about those things she knew and had experienced and that she must learn to look for the particular experience or experiences back of the poems she had been prompted by them to write. I found her to be open to my ideas and disciplined about applying them to her work. As I explained to her, there are many ways of looking at the writing of poems, but really no way of teaching anyone to do it. But if two people can agree upon the meaning and the purpose of writing poems, then they can offer each other suggestions, insights and some basic lessons in craft.

There was an anger in Elizabeth's earliest work that demanded effective imagery. Too often her images were unfocused: there would be too many of them pulling the mind's eye in too many directions. I prescribed strong dosages of Mr. Pound and Mr. Eliot and suggested that she try to consolidate her images around a central theme. Therefore, in a poem about pretending to drive her father's car as a child, images about the road, movement and power were of greater benefit to the poem as a whole than were well-made, but irrelevant, images about trees. This was not to deny that metaphor and surrealism can tie together seemingly different objects to strengthen the effect of a poem's

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Mr. Donzella is a creative writing teacher at Interarts in Bridgeport, CT., whose poems have appeared in Poetry, New York Quarterly, Village Voice and other publications. The student, Elizabeth Torphy, whose poems are the subject of this article, is a senior at Bunnell High School in Stratford, CT. She was a finalist in the National Council of Teachers of English Writing Achievement Awards contest and was one of three winners this year of the Wells College Poetry Prize.

theme. Instead I felt that she needed to learn to control her images and to build a confident sense of craft from which she could later experiment from strength and not desperation. I warned her that surrealism has often served as a means of avoiding the kind of statement and evaluation in literature which she was after. Its properties of mysticism in an overly rational world can easily approximate profundity.

Elizabeth brought to me what was to become in my consideration her first successful poem in the following form:

Another Notch On Your Headboard

Your kisses were heavy,
filling my mouth with certs, vodka and cigarettes,
trying to wrap your tongue around mine
and make it your trophy.
I was beneath you,
the soap opera lover, running my fingers through
your hair, caressing your back,
while inside I was screaming to be anywhere else.
You, older boy who I barely knew
with your cold fingers on my breasts and your
drunken mouth upon my neck,
how could I say no to your forcefulness?
How could I explain to you that I was too
young to be casually groped,
that blonde did not mean being easy and loving it?

You whispered hotly, "I love you"
and I, laughing lightly, stroking the hair from your
forehead
said: "Bullshit. You don't know me," then kissed your
protesting mouth. What I should have done was yelled
"Bullshit! YOU DON'T KNOW ME
SO WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING
WITH YOUR GRUBBY HANDS UP MY SHIRT??"

I hated you,
hated your older face when I opened my eyes
as we kissed and saw a sour dream,
hated your fumbling hands,
your hot breath.
But more than you,
I hated myself.

Two things struck me immediately about this draft: she had absented herself from responsibility for the action taking place in the poem--had left it mostly to the male; and in her anger had abandoned imagery for narrative. I felt that this event had remained with her because it disturbed her and had pointed to something fundamental about herself. I also understood that she had written about it because she wanted to understand what had happened so that she could accept it and put it to rest. These are the same reasons that motivate me to write poems.

Removing herself from responsibility for her part in the poem's action reflects our contemporary method of finding a scapegoat for personal failures in social entities. But aside from that, much of her anger was directed at herself for accepting that situation, for not stopping him. I communicated these ideas to her along with my regard for her bravery in writing about so painful an event. I told her also that it would be much more painful before she finished it. For me pain and poetry are nearly synonomous and I've been called a negative person because of it by the many who enjoy less cathartic poetry, but what can I do? Cathartic poems make me happy. I discern in them the human courage to respond to pain, to accept it and to survive. I learn from understanding someone else's pain. I see that it is possible to go on in spite of it. I feel infinitely less crazy and alone when I read that others are mauled too by a plethora of private and public ghosts.

As far as the text of the poem, I didn't feel there was much that was substantial there and so I did not make too many criticisms or suggestions. I felt that she needed to free the event and the emotion from the verse and start again. There was not enough room in the poem as it then stood for her to face her actions and her feelings. Elizabeth went back and worked on the poem. With minor changes it appeared as follows:

Not Father

Summer brings a boy
who needs love
but who doesn't know how to
say or believe it.
He comes to me from the road.
He has hitchhiked to my house
as we planned on the phone.
We hardly know each other
but we need to be hurt by pretense.
In the basement
we are whispers in each others arms
while my parents hate above us
and nothing is below us
but earth and cement and dark rust carpet.

It is hard on the floor
with this boy
with his hands on me,
my lips meeting his,
tongue meeting his,
my hand on his cheek
pretending to love.
I am as bad as an old wife
who feigns her orgasms--(He knows,
he knows).

Instead of pushing away
and running up to my greying father
as my mind commands
I think that being fourteen
makes me a strong woman.
But then, I had always taken
Daddy's over-the-knee punishments quietly.

He says: "I love you."
I stiffle his mouth with my lips,
afraid of what will come after that.

The anger has become comprehension and the pace and tone is now slow enough to build images. In this version Elizabeth has recognized her own part in the action: "we planned on the phone" and "we are whispers in each others arms." And a new figure has entered the poem, that of her father: greying, punitive, unhappy. She had come to terms with a larger significance than the boy. There is her father's influence and her relation to men through him and his expectations of her. She sees in both relationships that she has acquiesced in the face of male ego. This realization brings also the knowledge that there are alternatives and that she has regained responsibility for her actions as well as the potential to control her life.

These lessons may be clear and common to all of us, Elizabeth Torphy included, without the poem; however to know this intellectually and to come by this through the process of writing a poem are two very different things. In order to attain the former you need simply pay attention to the tons of verbiage heaped upon you by parents and various morality plays dispensed by schools and the media. But to learn this through a poem is to gain an emotional truth. Poetry is as exact as mathematics in defining our emotions. With it we can make accurate and enduring equations that will mean more to us than any number of platitudes. It is in this way that I feel Elizabeth succeeded in her second version of this poem. She gained insight into an event in her life that has had enough importance for her to have carried it around with her since it happened. And I know that what she has learned about herself in the poem she has accomplished in sincerity, for I do not believe that you can lie to yourself in a poem such as this. I never taught her this. She brought it with her when she came and she'll have it with her for the rest of her life.

PAPERBACK REVIEW

One Fat Summer by Robert Lipsyte.
Bantam, 1978. 150 pp. $1.75.

In the last few years several books concerned with the problem of obesity have been written for teenagers. Such books as Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack and The Cat Ate My Gym Suit have been extremely popular with girls. Robert Lipsyte, author of the popular novel, The Contender, has now written a "fat" book for boys which details the ups and downs of 14-year-old Bobby Marks during the summer of 1957. Bobby is called the "Crisco Kid" because he is fat in the can! He says he weighs 200 pounds, but that's not exactly true. Every time the scale gets to the 200 mark, he jumps off. Bobby compensates for his weight problem in two ways: he maintains an ever present sense of humor, and he has a girl friend with a long, crooked nose. Bobby says of Joanie, "When we were alone together I felt thin, and I think she felt pretty." Mr. Lipsyte's cast of supporting characters includes a mother who wants a career of her own, a sister embroiled in her first love affair with the local athletic hero, an ex-marine punk whose summer job of cutting grass was taken away by Bobby, and the stern, dictator-like Dr. Kahn who hires Bobby only to cut his wages in half. One Fat Summer, an entertaining book for both teenagers and adults, looks like another big hit for Robert Lipsyte.

Reviewed by Philip M. Connors, Kennedy Junior High School, Enfield, CT.

PAPERBACK REVIEW

Winning by Robin Brancato.
Bantam, 1978. 165 pp. $1.75.

Gary Madden is a star high school athlete--popular, vibrant, with a promising future. But a sudden spinal injury during a football game leaves him paralized, strapped to a Stryker frame, administered to by hospital personnel and an overprotective mother. Gary's realistic responses to his fate--denial, anger, courage, thoughts of suicide, acceptance--and to the reactions of those around him--concern and acknowledgment by some, fear and avoidance by others--make this novel worthwhile reading for teenagers. Although Gary's girlfriend's dedication is a little too idealistic, and his parents are too typically unable to cope adequately with their son's disability, it's refreshing to read a young adult novel where at least one adult is realistic, not without her own problems, and in tune with kids' feelings. Ann Treer, Gary's English teacher, religiously tutors Gary and, through discussing books and having Gary tape record a personal journal, helps him cope with being a "quad." Another strength of Winning is that we get the story not just from Gary but from Ms. Treer as well, thus making for a more balanced, more insightful exploration of the pain and problems which accompany the permanent physical incapacity of a young man. This book will provide insightful recreational reading not only for the usual avid female reader but for reluctant jocks as well.

Reviewed by Don Gallo, CCSC.

Selecting Poetry: Resources

Charles R. Duke

Time and again, when asked about what literary form they find most difficult to teach, English teachers usually identify poetry. The reasons for this may vary: lack of appropriate training on the part of teachers, student misconceptions about poetry, or, often as not, the inappropriateness of the selections used to introduce students to poetry.

Faced with the problem of finding appropriate poetry for young people, harrassed teachers typically turn to the most immediate resource: the literature textbook. Here, teachers reason, one should find all the material necessary to spark students' interest. Several selections later and several class periods of muffled and not so muffled groans, sighs, and outright hostility, chastened teachers throw up their hands and come to the conclusion that nothing works. Here endeth the poetry unit.

Such experiences need not be the case. If we want to make any gains in helping students develop an appreciation and liking for poetry, we will need to expend much more effort in locating poems which students can respond to and find meaningful. To accomplish this, the teacher will need to spend a good deal of time becoming familiar with what is available in poetry--and that is no easy task, since poems appear in many places besides the traditional literary text: magazines, newspapers, gravestones, advertisements, television, songs, student writing, computers, and bathroom walls.

Many of the previously mentioned sources can be used only if the teacher remains alert to their existence and diligently collects samples as appropriate works appear. On the other hand, familiarity with a wide number of collections also can give the teacher a substantial body of poetry to draw upon and then supplement with selections from the other sources. In making selections from any source, however, the collector needs to keep several principles in mind.

1. <u>Select poems which deal with experiences that students can relate to</u>.

   Such selection does not mean that one must always choose contemporary works--although a good number of poems should come from modern times--but that the experience of the poem should be one accessible to students, either

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through their own experiences of a similar nature or through interest in the particular theme or concept.

2. Select poems which can be grasped for their basic meaning in one reading.

Probably no greater damage has been done to the appreciation of poetry in students' eyes than forcing them to read poems which teachers wrestled with in undergraduate and graduate courses where line by line analysis and glossing were the principal activities, not the reader's response. Naturally, at some time in students' experiences with poetry, they should encounter poems which stretch the mind and require considerable intellectual discipline in order to achieve understanding, but a steady diet of such works is the quickest route to apathy or outright hostility whenever poetry is mentioned. Selection should also mean that vocabulary is within reach of the student; an occasional unknown word is fine, but the student should not have to spend considerable time looking up unfamiliar words or consulting footnotes in order to achieve appreciation of the poem; the same may be said for images and symbols. The poem should not be overly long; shorter poems mean that more reading, oral and silent, can take place in one class period and a poem can be heard several times for several different reasons.

3. Select poems which represent a variety of forms and language.

Traditionally, students seem to favor poems that rhyme and are somewhat humorous. Ann Terry in Children's Poetry Preferences: A National Survey of Upper Elementary Grades (NCTE, 1974) discovered that the twenty-five most popular poems among upper elementary students contained definite rhyming patterns. A review of collections of children's literature most frequently used in the early grades reveals that the majority of selections do, indeed, contain distinct rhyming patterns. Conditioned to believe this is the norm, students faced with unrhymed verse often reject it as not being "poetry." While acknowledging the existence of rhyme in poetry, teachers may want to introduce gradually poems which further the recognition of cadence and sounds and of the difference between prose and poetic utterance.

4. Select only those poems for which the teacher can develop an enthusiasm.

This advice may, at first glance, seem contradictory, since many teachers have been selecting works for which they have great interest and enthusiasm. However, it is primarily a case of using what you are most familiar with;

for example, in the Terry study, of the forty-one poems most frequently read by teachers to students, only four were written after 1928. Such information suggests that teachers need to become familiar with more contemporary works for which they may also engender some enthusiasm because it is these "older" poems which so many students seem to reject.

5. Select poems that have been identified by students as favorites, or poems that they willingly want to read, study, and discuss, for use with future classes.

   Many teachers have found that their best lessons on poetry occur when the students themselves are allowed to select the works to be studied. Providing students with collections of poetry and encouraging them to consult some of the sources mentioned earlier, teachers will inevitably find poetry becoming a more natural part of classroom activity. This free selection is not without surprises for the teacher used to dealing with the "old favorites." Rock lyrics, graffitti, and greeting card verse may all surface as student selections; but if teachers want to have equal time with their choices, then the same courtesy ought to be extended to students and their selections. Often such a mix produces a deeper appreciation for the strengths and weaknesses in all poetry.

Although placing grade level designations on types of poetry is not the most reliable means for arriving at a selection process--because it suggests a growth pattern that may not always reflect the true reading and interest levels of a class--the following general summaries may prove somewhat helpful:

Grades 5-8: students at this level tend to like story poems, folk ballads, humorous selections, and poems about animals and heroes; very short lyric poems and selections with strong rhyme schemes and a definite meter seem to work well. Students at this level, however, should also have some introduction to poems without the strong rhyme.

Grades 9-10: students at this level can appreciate haiku and popular song lyrics as poetry; however, the liking for haiku may not be as widespread as once believed; students find it difficult to grasp the "frozen moment" of the traditional Japanese haiku although the simplicity of the form appeals to them; concrete poetry for some students may stir strong interest; short lyric poems, dramatic poems, and free verse poems about modern life, adolescence, and nature meet with favorable response.

Grades 11-12: many students at this age can handle longer lyric poems, blank verse, and some of the traditional poetic forms such as the sonnet, literary ballad, and dramatic monologue; poems exploring contemporary problems of love, death, human frailty, protest and identity remain popular with students.

The primary source for finding such poetry remains the anthology. A collection of poetry can be a quick and easy reference tool, simple to dip into for those few moments at the end of a class period when one wants to read a piece out loud just for the ideas or for the mood; or the anthology can be a source for sustained study. But simply having an anthology available does not solve the selection problem. Many poems which appear in anthologies do not work well when it comes to stimulating student interest in poetry. Therefore, a teacher must be quite familiar with the contents of many collections and select only those poems which will be appropriate for particular students. For the same reason, a particular anthology should not be kept too long as a prime resource. New collections appear frequently, and the teacher should attempt to become familiar with these, selecting those which seem to have the most appropriate selections to add to a desk or room collection.

The following list of anthologies, all available in paperback, suggests the richness of the field. No attempt has been made to deal with the myriad volumes of individual authors' works; the teacher seeking information on such materials should consult a reference such as Granger's Index to Poetry (Columbia University Press) or the Index to Children's Poetry (H. W. Wilson Company). Instead, an attempt has been made to offer a representative listing so that teachers may see what is available and start to compile a listing for themselves. In most cases, emphasis has been placed upon identifying collections of contemporary writers.

REPRESENTATIVE POETRY ANTHOLOGIES

Adoff, Arnold, ed. Black Out Loud, An Anthology of Modern Poems by Black Americans. New York: Dell.

Selected as an ALA Notable Book and New York Times Outstanding Book, this collection offers an excellent sampling of modern Black poetry. The poems contain direct, vivid language which will appeal to young people.

Benedikt, Michael, ed. The Prose Poem, An International Anthology. New York: Dell.

Although this collection is not poetry in the literal sense of the word, it is an anthology which shows a form of prose which has been written with intense use of poetic devices. Arranged chronologically by country, the selections should offer the teacher some interesting material for comparison with recognized poems.

Bennett, George, and Malloy, Paul, eds. Cavalcade of Poems. New York: Scholastic.

This anthology has proven useful with students; the poems are grouped under the following headings: poems of observation, narrative poems, heroic poems, poems of experience, poems in pairs for comparison, poems of the challenge of life, and a range beyond. The poems are short and accessible to average or above average readers.

Bettenbender, John, ed. Poetry Festival. New York: Dell.

A mixture of poets from the past--Longfellow, Whittier, Keats and Poe--along with poets of more recent times such as Frost, Yeats and Joyce. A good collection for dipping into and as a resource for students.

Bich, Nguyen Ngoc, ed. A Thousand Years of Vietnamese Poetry. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Although this anthology will not be for use in every class, the collection contains some poems which should pique student interest; arranged according to four divisions: the scholarly tradition, the popular tradition, the rise of a national poetry, and modern times. Brief commentary provides an introduction to each section of the text and explains some of the special aspects of Vietnamese life.

Bierhorst, John, ed. In the Trail of the Wind, American Indian Poems. New York: Dell.

American Indian literature is just beginning to be recognized for its proper place in our literary heritage; this collection provides a good introduction to the field; students will be intrigued by the subject matter and the attitudes reflected in these poems.

Carruth, Hayden, ed. The Voice That Is Great Within Us: American Poetry of the Twentieth Century. New York: Bantam.

The works of over 130 major American poets of the modern period are included in this collection; for a picture of the range of modern poetry, this volume should prove indispensable. It is not, however, a collection that one would want to use completely with a class.

Charge of the Light Brigade and Other Story Poems. New York: Scholastic.

This valuable collection of narrative poems is suitable for use with a wide range of students. The collection represents a variety of historical and literary story poems grouped under the following headings: patriotism and adventure ("The Charge of the Light Brigade," "Old Ironsides"); fun and fantasy ("Cremation of Sam McGee," "Casey at the Bat"); the famous and the infamous ("Gunga Din," "Jesse James"); ballads

of yesterday and today ("Lord Randal," "Ode to Billy Joe"); poems of the heart ("The Creation," "Annabel Lee"); and the world today ("Mother to Son," "The Unknown").

Dunning, Stephen, ed. Mad, Sad and Glad. New York: Scholastic.

Poems in this collection were selected from those submitted for Scholastic's Creative Writing Awards. Many of the poems are certain to speak to young people because of the subject matter: love, fun, death, relationships. Students will be encouraged to write their own poems after seeing the work of these student poets.

Dunning, Stephen, and others, eds. Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle.... New York: Scholastic.

This anthology, originally published by Scott, Foresman, is one of the most popular collections with adolescents. Poems range from the serious to the humorous and span a number of years, although most of the authors are from the twentieth century. Appropriate photographs are interspersed throughout the book; a definite "must" for every poetry shelf.

Eaton, M. Joe and Glass, Malcolm, eds. Grab Me a Bus.... New York: Scholastic.

Another collection of poems from the Scholastic Writing Awards, the poems are short and reflect adolescent concerns. Photographs, also by students, accompany many of the poems.

Field, Edward, ed. A Geography of Poets. New York: Bantam.

The more than 200 poets represented in this collection suggest the regional and cultural diversity of modern poetry. Poems in this anthology will probably have to be selected carefully for use with adolescents since much of the material is for mature readers.

Goldstein, Richard, ed. The Poetry of Rock. New York: Bantam.

This collection has been one of the most consistently popular anthologies of rock lyrics; Goldstein's informal and lively comments about the works of Bob Dylan, Lennon-McCartney, Paul Simon, Donovan, and The Doors add value to the text. Somewhat dated now, the text nevertheless remains popular with young people.

Haiku Poetry: A Children's Collection. New York: Bantam.

This anthology was created from the writings of four-to-eight year old children in the Wilhelm Schole of Houston, Texas. The various haiku show a strong relationship to the traditional Japanese form and should prompt considerable interest and writing from students of various ages.

Halpern, Daniel, ed. The American Poetry Anthology. New York: Avon.

This anthology presents the works of poets whose poetry has been published since 1968; an excellent resource for becoming familiar with some of our most recent poets.

Joseph, Stephen M., ed. The Me Nobody Knows. New York: Avon.

Writers of the selections in this anthology are ghetto children. The poems touch upon family life, loneliness, neighborhoods, the world beyond, and fantasy. Seeing and reading these poems, students should be encouraged to produce some of their own.

Kenseth, Arnold, ed. Poems of Protest Old and New. New York: Macmillan Company.

This thematic collection draws on poems from a variety of cultures and time periods. Some of the poems may appear dated and may not be entirely accessible to some students upon first reading. However, the universality of the theme through the ages can be easily demonstrated through use of some of these selections.

Klonsky, Milton, ed. The Best of Modern Poetry. New York: Pocket Books.

This collection of over 300 British and American poems represents a good spectrum of modern poetry. Although this is an anthology of "adult" poetry, judicious use of the volume with older students should yield profitable moments. Of particular value are the inclusion of some lesser known poets, samples of concrete poetry, and less frequently anthologized pieces by well known poets.

Knudson, R. R. and Ebert, P. K., eds. Sports Poems. New York: Dell.

This collection ought to surprise a good number of students, particularly boys; included are poems about football, baseball, basketball, and a number of minor sports. The poets include John Updike, May Swenson, James Dickey, Ogden Nash, and Carl Sandburg.

Larrick, Nancy, ed. On City Streets. New York: Bantam.

Short selections supported by black and white photographs focus on various aspects of city life. This is a popular anthology where poets such as Carl Sandburg, John Berryman, Langston Hughes, and Walt Whitman rub pages with lesser known writers like Gregory Corso, Joseph March, Tom Prideaux.

Lee, Al, ed. The Major Young Poets. New York: New American Library.

This anthology contains the works of such poets as Marvin

Bell, Michael Benedikt, William Brown, Charles Simic, and others. It provides a view of the directions some of our modern poets are going; selections are most appropriate for mature readers.

Lewis, Richard, ed. Miracles: Poems by Children of the English-Speaking World. New York: Bantam.

The value of this collection lies in its diversity; here are nearly 200 poems written by children around the world, their ages ranging from 5 to 13; a valuable stimulus for getting students to write their own poems.

Morse, David, ed. Grandfather Rock. New York: Dell.

This popular collection provides a comparison of rock lyrics and classical poetry; the case is clearly made that both are based on the need to express human thoughts and feelings; a valuable resource for dealing with the popularity of modern song lyrics.

Niebling, Richard A. A Journey of Poems. New York: Dell.

Although this anthology has been available for some time, it remains a highly popular one with students and teachers. The editor indicates that one of the principles for including a selection was that it had worked with students for a number of years. The collection is somewhat thematic and somewhat chronological in organization; the text is one which fairly verbal students should enjoy.

Palgrave, F. T. The Golden Treasury. New York: New American Library.

This is one of the oldest collections which has been revised and up-dated. Contains 690 selections ranging from the sixteenth century to the present. A valuable reference work.

Payne, Robert, ed. The White Pony. New York: New American Library.

Few students will be aware of the traditions in Chinese poetry; this collection offers examples of poetry spanning 3,000 years, from the Chou Dynasty in 1112 B.C. to the present. Certainly not for everyone, the collection still may yield some interesting selections for better students.

Peck, Richard, ed. Pictures That Storm Inside My Head: Poems for the Inner You. New York: Avon.

Designed to appeal to secondary school young people, this anthology addresses such themes as youth, life and death, role playing, and youth from the perspectives of adulthood. Most students should be able to find a number of selections that appeal to them.

Peck, Richard, ed. Sounds and Silences. New York: Dell.

Collected especially for adolescents, the selections in this anthology speak to such concerns as family, childhood, isolation, identity, realities, illusion, dissent, communication, love, war, pain, and recollections. A very useful thematic collection.

Randall, Dudley, ed. The Black Poets. New York: Bantam.

The anthology covers black American poetry from the slave songs through the 60s. Photographs and critical biographies of the poets are included. The range is sufficient so that the teacher should find a number of selections suitable for a variety of audiences.

Ryan, Betsy, ed. Search the Silence: Poems of Self-Discovery. New York: Scholastic.

The collection contains mostly contemporary poems, a section of quotations, and a section of songs; the theme of loneliness and self-discovery form the organization principle; photographs accompany some of the selections.

Ryan, Betsy, ed. Sounds of Silence. New York: Scholastic.

This slim volume--96 pages--contains both prose and poetry, but primarily the latter. Included as part of the poetry are lyrics from a number of popular songs. All selections key on the central theme of loneliness. Students will recognize easily a number of the sources, and the mixture of such poets as T. S. Eliot ("The Hollow Men") and Bob Dylan should provide a basis for interesting discussion.

Strand, Mark, ed. The Contemporary American Poets. New York: New American Library.

A collection of poets who have written since 1940; useful as a reference and as a resource. Probably not appropriate as a class text.

Warren, Robert Penn, and Erskine, Albert, eds. Six Centuries of Great Poetry. New York: Dell.

This anthology has been a popular one at both the secondary and college levels. It provides an extensive collection of English lyric poetry by more than 100 poets, ranging from Chaucer to Yeats. Excellent resource for the more traditional poetry.

An Approach to Teaching Poetry: Grade 7

Jacqueline M. Farrell and Irene Kwidzinski

OBJECTIVES

The major objectives of the program are to introduce students to some basic forms of poetry, to help them realize that poetry can deal with their lives and everyday things, and to create a genuine enjoyment of poetry and enthusiasm for it. They are exposed to figurative language and to the terminology of poetry: alliteration, simile, metaphor, rhyme scheme, personification, and onomatopoeia.

PROCEDURE

Begin by introducing students to acrostic poems and poems in geometrical shapes. These are among the easiest for students to write and thus foster the attitude that "I too can create poems." Two student-written examples follow.

Acrostic:

Beautiful
Incredible
Reliable
Terrific
Happy
Days
And
Yummy cakes
Super

Geometric:

Golf ball
swing,
hard, far, fast, green, putt, drive, fairway

--Bill Martin

Proceed to an exploration of more complicated forms and expose students to the following terminology: alliteration, simile, metaphor, personification, rhyme scheme, onomatopoeia, imagery, figurative language. Help students to become more aware of the poetry of everyday language by conducting such activities as Alliteration Hunts. In an Alliteration Hunt students search for examples of alliteration in advertisements and newspaper headlines. "Spring Sandal Sale" is one example.

The students are then ready to compose their own poetry books which contain only original poems. They are required to include a narrative poem, a haiku, a limerick, a who-what-when-where-why poem, a cinquain, a tongue tangler, a poem to solve, and a nature poem which may take any form.

Both Ms. Farrell and Ms. Kwidzinski teach English at the Schaghticoke Middle School in New Milford, CT.

A narrative poem simply tells a story. Following are two examples written by seventh-grade students.

Night Owl

Have you seen the midnight owl
As he swoops through the deep, dark sky?
Was it his eyes or his menacing scowl
That scared you when he flew by?

All through the night he hunts for his prey,
Without even a wink of sleep;
Then he sees the light of day.
He sits on a branch asleep.

--Martha Rogg

The Night of February 23

It was the night of February 23,
When my cousin was out of town.
He witnessed a murder in the street said he,
And now he is not to be found.

Then one night I was on my bed.
I heard a car coming down the road.
All I could think of was my cousin, in my head
I ran downstairs and there he was all wet and cold.

--Bruce Munson

A haiku is a three line poem which originated in Japan. It traditionally deals with a nature theme, but modern haiku may be on any topic. The first line contains five syllables, the second line has seven, and the third has five. One student wrote:

The sun is setting
The air is full of sounds
The end of a day

--Martha Rogg

Another student chose a more contemporary theme:

Nuclear weapons
Our greatest of creations
Press button, BOOM, gone

--David Scholze

A limerick is a five line poem on a humorous topic. It has a definite rhythm and rhyme scheme which students assimilate after reading numerous examples. For those students who have difficulty

in understanding the rhythm pattern, it can best be explained as containing the following series of syllables: 8-10 syllables/ 8-10 syllables/ 5 syllables/ 5 syllables/ 8-10 syllables. The rhyme scheme is A A B B A.

There was a brown cat named Sylvester
Who worked as King Philip's court jester
And during his reign
He was crushed by a train
And that was the end of Sylvester.

--E. Reid

The who-what-when-where-why poem also have five lines. In each line the student answers one of the "Five W's." The following are more student examples.

Travelers
Checking out
Every day
Airports, train stations
They need a vacation.

Snoopy
Fighting
In World War II
In Germany
To get the Red Baron

George Washington
First President of the United States
1789-97
In the capital
To keep the country together.

In a cinquain the first line contains one noun, the second line has two adjectives, the third has three verbs, the fourth adds four more adjectives, and the fifth repeats the original noun or gives a synonym of it.

Hockey
Hard, Fun
Checking, Scoring, Winning
Tiring, Fast, Rough, Tough
Rangers

--Bob Nargi

December
Cold, Fun
Skating, Snowballfighting, Sledding
Chilly, Cosy, Icy, Snowy
Winter

--Michelle Lindroos

Pigs
Muddy, Ugly
Fast, Little, Fat
Dirty, Noisy, Funny, Cuddly
Pigs

--Greg Panozza

Spring
Sunny, Gentle
Comes, Stays, Leaves
Unpredictable, Mild, Beautiful, Green
Spring

--K. Cruise

The tongue-tangler gives students a work-out in using alliteration. And their creations are often imaginative.

I'm the spy
that spied the spy
near the spy's spy quarters.

--Bill Martin

Silly Cindy Sue sells sailing
ships to sail at the seashore.
So if you seek a ship to sail,
see Cindy Sue.

--Valerie Tutson

The poem to solve poses a mystery for the reader. Its effectiveness depends upon a careful choice of details and the use of descriptive words.

I'm sometimes wet,
I'm sometimes dry,
I make things go,
I make things fly,
Now there is a shortage of me,
Some people think I'm at the bottom of the sea
But I'm hiding because people don't treat me right,
So they had better start getting tight
They think I'm on some unknown shelves,
But if they don't act quick they had better
Find something else.

(Gasoline)
--R. Beebe

The laps are rolling along
The crash is almost deafening
The spray stings against your face.
Sand is everywhere you look,
Except for a few giant boulders.

(Seashore)

For the poem on a particular theme, we have used the nature poem. However, any topic with which the students are familiar would work equally well.

I sit beside the fire and think
of all that I have seen,
of meadow flowers and butterflies
in summers that have been,
of yellow leaves and gossamer
in autumns that there were.
with morning mist and silver sun
and wind upon my hair.

--David Scholze

Tree
Outside my window
I wonder
If you'll grow after
I leave you?
It hurts inside
To think you might
Not need me anymore.

--Wendy Byrne

Others take nature less seriously.

Anteaters

What a sad looking creature
is the great anteater.
But believe it or not
he has a great sense of humor.
One must remember to never accept
his invitation for tea and insects.

--M. Lindroos

Some combine the nature theme with other forms that we have studied.

Fire
Blazing and Hot
Burning, Destroying, and Crackling
Red, Sparkling, Dangerous, and Alive
Fire

--M. Burke

After completing their books, the students are required to choose a poem which they enjoyed and wish to remember, memorize it, and recite it for the class. A copy of the poem and a one paragraph biography on its author are added to their poetry books.

A few students always choose to go beyond the required forms and attempt more demanding types, such as ballads. Their attempts are often successful.

Calvin McQ

Calvin McQ came riding,
holsters around his waist,
two gun man,
spurs on his boots.
Robbing bank after bank
collecting his loot.
A riding, riding
chasing railroad trains.
Once in the boxcar, follows down the lane.
Robbing, Robbing, Robbing
Rich, Rich, Rich

McQ is wanted for robbery. $1000 dollar reward.

Calvin McQ isn't around much anymore.
He hides away up high on top of a mountain
in ZuZu, Arizona.

--Leslie Westfall

And a reflection upon the frustrations of writing poetry even inspired one student.

Broken pencils and an apple core,
lying on my bedroom floor.
Frustration and anger fill the air,
this poem I can no longer bear.
My mind grows weak and my fingers ache.
I don't know how much more I can take.
Writing this poem is such a chore,
Even reading it will be a bore.

--M. Burke

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Poetry Is

Mike Angelotti

Poetry is
Definitely
For salty submariners
Not Sunday sailboaters.

I discovered that
While diving

Deep

Deep

Into a poem.

Dr. Angelotti is Associate Professor of Reading and English Education at Texas Tech University.

I Know Them By Heart—
A Young Poet Remembers Her Teachers of Poetry

Jeanne Dowd

Until seventh grade my schooling in poetry had been limited to its memorization for recitation. For a quiet, shy child that task could have easily turned me totally against poetry. Luckily, I had a mother who could find value in almost anything and an especial value in words. She would be enthusiastically involved from the choosing of the poem to its constant repetition as I practiced with her as audience.

As for the writing of poetry in my early years, I remember it being a seasonal exercise so that themes were limited to Fall, Winter, Spring, or Summer. I found little encouragement from teachers for any extra writing to be done. This, coupled with the attitude of my peers towards my efforts made writing a very private experience for me and a very occasional one.

But in the seventh grade I was blessed with an exciting English teacher, Mr. Masaitis. Although his name sounded like a disease, it was only his enthusiasm that was contagious. For the first time in my life I had a teacher who seemed sincerely concerned with each student as an individual and that we became individuals. He had us reading everything from editorials to novels and we were always writing. Writing about what we read, writing sequels to what we read, writing as the voice of inanimate objects, etc. He was as full of ideas as he was of encouragement, writing us personal comments on everything we wrote.

One day, he wrote Randal Jarrell's "The Death of the Ball Turrett Gunner" on the blackboard, explaining the poem and the form of the tanka to us. I couldn't wait to try one myself as he suggested we might. Writing the tanka was not an assignment. He did not want us to have to write a poem. But I felt he, as a young teacher with many ideals, was hoping we would want to write poetry after that class. For me, still the shy girl, it was a way of saying what I had to say and yet keeping somewhat secret what I was saying.

By the next day, I had written a tanka which I handed to him as I walked into English class. To my horror I was the only one in the class who had followed his suggestion. More embarrassing than that, he wrote my tanka on the blackboard for the whole class to see and discuss. Yet, despite my mortification, some part of me was thrilled at having that tanka made known, at hearing it discussed by the teacher I admired so much.

Presently an adjunct faculty member of the English department at the University of Hartford and an assistant teacher at Oak Hill School for the Blind, Jeanne Dowd has recently published poems in the Ann Arbor Review and Willow Springs Magazine.

From then on Mr. Masaitis would always ask how my poetry was coming along and volunteer to read it for me. I loved him for all he taught me and for his concern. At first, I think I wrote because of that concern. Someone was willing to spend time helping me write poetry. If I didn't try writing, I'd be letting him down. But I still didn't want the attention of my peers for doing so. I stuck to doing assignments for the rest of the year.

In eighth grade I had a different English teacher. She said the novels we read with Mr. Masaitis were shameful and that Up the Down Staircase wasn't even a book. We were back to grammar exercises and seasonal poems. She graded my "Winter" poem with a B, rewriting it herself. To receive an A for the poem all I had to do was recopy in my handwriting her changes. Instead, I revised the poem. She returned my poem to me with another B scratched over it. After such a thrilling year in seventh grade, I was miserable in that class. Again, Mr. Masaitis came to my rescue and promised to look at anything I wrote and to keep it secret. Almost every day, sometimes twice a day, I would quickly hand him a piece of paper folded small enough to fit in my pocket and then his as I passed him in the hall. Once a month or so, I would stay after school to discuss the poems with him. Sometimes I would come from those meetings loaded with books--books from his own collection entrusted to me. I wanted to learn everything those books had to teach. I wanted to read every poem contained in them.

At mid-year I had my biggest thrill when he suggested I enter the Scholastic Writing Contest. My eighth grade teacher never knew anything about it because Mr. Masaitis signed the form for me. Weeks later I had my first big disappointment about my work when I did not win a prize. I was sure I would never be able to write again. But Mr. Masaitis continued to encourage and I continued to write.

I was sorry to have to graduate that year. I was afraid it would mean he would never read my poems again. On the last day of school, in front of classmates saying goodbye, he gave me a book of poetry. If any of the kids remarked on my gift, I don't remember and I'm sure I didn't care. I hurried out of the building to read the book without their judgements. Inside the book I found a sealed envelope containing a letter full of concern for me, a sensitive, shy girl, and encouragement for the extremely young poet. He was making one more impact on me and the future I had been worried about.

I spent the summer going over his words and writing down my own. I looked forward to September when I might be able to see him again, but I was soon to learn that he had left my old school, left the state, and was attending Columbia University. I also learned, however, that he wanted to hear from his former students.

The English teacher I had freshman year in high school was, luckily, receptive to my writing. He felt I should be in the

honors division of English courses. I was thrilled and thankful to Mr. Masaitis who had had us reading novels in seventh grade that were more advanced than the ones I was reading in my freshman class.

This teacher's only concern about my entering Honors English was my timidity. He did, however, promote me into Honors English sophomore year and he was again my teacher. But that year he seemed cruel to me. He may have been sincerely trying to change me from the quiet student I was to a more fluent one, but his methods had the opposite effect. He threatened to not give me credit for homework I did not share in class, and he carried out his threat. There I was competing in a class of students who, I thought, were much brighter than I and, though my grades might have been equal to theirs to begin with, as a result of the teacher's system my grades eventually were far below. I had been afraid of being inadequate in the honors class and these unfair grades were proof to everyone that I was.

Every year since eighth grade, I continued to enter the Scholastic Writing Contest. Each year my teacher had to see the entries and sign the entry form. On the day of the deadline, my tenth grade teacher read and rewrote the poems as he thought winning poems should be written. I brought the "corrected" poems home to retype but revised them myself. The teacher never saw the poems I sent in. I won Honorable Mention with these poems and I was more thrilled than I'd ever been. My teacher's congratulations included a reminder that I had won with his help, insinuating that I'd have lost without it.

Not winning prizes in the contest the following two years, I worried that he had been right. Constantly a help to me were the occasional letters from Mr. Masaitis who always found something in my work to encourage, whether or not they were prize-winning pieces.

If the experience with that high school teacher taught me anything, it taught me to be very selective about who read my work. For years I rarely showed it to anyone, settling for, but dissatisfied with, my own criticism.

The summer before my senior year at Central Connecticut State College, a writers' conference was added to the list of English courses available. By signing up for the course I would be able to get much needed criticism from the poet Brendan Galvin, whose work I admired. To my surprise, Dr. Galvin found more in my work than a good grade. I was encouraged by the possibilities he continually found in it as I studied with him for the next year.

Even after my graduation from Central, he was willing to read my work, and he encouraged me to go on to graduate school. I received from him information about writing programs all over the country and again I had the feeling I'd be letting more than myself down if I did not apply to graduate schools after all the time Brendan Galvin had spent guiding and supporting my work.

Luckily for me, I did take his advice. I entered Goddard College's MFA Writing Program a year after finishing at Central. There, the poet-teacher who impressed me most was Heather McHugh. Her insight was invaluable to my growth as a poet as was her love for my work. I thank her for it as I thank Brendan Galvin and Peter Masaitis for being outstanding teachers who shared their knowledge, their time, and their benevolence. Because of them, if I remember lines of poetry now, it is out of love for the words and their music.

PAPERBACK REVIEW

Disaster! When Nature Strikes Back. The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. Bantam/Britannica Books, 1978. 377 pp. $2.50.

One of the new texts published under the joint efforts of Bantam and Britannica Books, Disaster! is well-written, attractively packaged along with an avalanche of supporting photographs and diagrams, and backed with an encyclopedic range of facts, explanations, and details. The first two thirds of the book deals with natural disasters, their most infamous occurrences, and the scientific and geophysical explanations behind their creations. The writing is lucid, unadorned, and has the taste of prose from the latest Scientific American. Unfortunately, after the first five or so accounts of earthquakes, volcano eruptions, tsunamis, and hurricanes, each repeated catastrophe becomes a copy of the last, with body counts and property damages the only changing factors. Those with a real bloodthirst would find it fascinating. The first two sections of Disaster! are more than suited for a place in any high school earth science class. The only application Disaster! could have to the English classroom lies in its last chapter, "Myths of Natural Catastrophe." Here is covered in only thirty short pages the influences that natural disasters have had on religion, myth, and history. If the editors of Disaster! had devoted more time and space to this final chapter than to the wasteful documentation of repeating catastrophes, this book would have become more than just a compendium of destruction.

Reviewed by Joseph R. Calabro, Pomeraugh High School, Southbury, CT.

Writing More Cementy: Some Strategies for Teaching Poetry-Writing

Brendan Galvin

"I know, I know. You want me to write more cementy," she says, and she is right, except that she has confused cement and concrete. The toughest thing for a writing teacher on any level is getting the student to write in concrete, physical terms about his or her own experience. Too often initial efforts at writing poetry are really the skeletons of poems; that is, the bones of the event have been extracted, and held up for view, while the particulars which would have made the work truly the student's own have been omitted. We are great abstractors, and poetry deals with the evidence of the five senses: "No ideas but in things," as William Carlos Williams put it. Here, briefly, are some exercises to help students contact the world of sight, smell, taste, touch, and sound. I have used them profitably in most grades from one to twelve.

I. BREAKING THE SILENCE

Read poems you like, and that the students can identify with. Funny poems can warm them up to the point where they might want to try a group poem. Pick a topic like, "Life as a _____ is never easy," and let them suggest things to fill in the blank. Take a vote, but try to steer for the farthest-out suggestion. Among "student," "zit," "bartender," and "cop," go for "zit." OK, why is life as a zit difficult? Write their suggestions on the board. Cover the board, all the while feeding them questions like, "What do zits do for fun?" One student's answer: "They sit on our face and laugh at us." You can intensify this to: "They sit on our faces and watch other people laugh at us." This kind of ice-breaker usually will involve most of the class, and you might be prepared to allow more kidding around than you normally do. After the blackboard is covered, it's time for the individual poems. Invite the students to select whatever ideas each wants to use, and to add others they may think of as they're writing. You'll be surprised at the variety of "My Life as a Zit" (or whatever) poems they can come up with. Read a bunch with conviction, pointing out some of the good things in each, even if you have to strain a bit to find merit in some of them. The students should now be at the point where they're willing to try poems on their own.

In addition to working as a poet-in-schools, Brendan Galvin is an Associate Professor of English at Central Connecticut State College. Dr. Galvin's poems have appeared in such notable magazines as The New Yorker, Harpers, and The Atlantic, and he has published four collections of his poems through the University of Pittsburgh Press, the most recent of which is The Minutes No One Owns.

II. SEEING. WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

Bring in a print of an interesting painting with lots of action in it. Prop it against a wall, or, if it's in an art book, walk around the class with it for awhile, then put it someplace where individual students can go up and take a close look at it. Breughel the Elder is great for this. So are Henri Rousseau, modern primitives like Ivan Generalic, and various Surrealists. Ask students to write about what they see or feel. Encourage the writers not to think of it as a painting, but as something they can develop their own ideas from. Again, ask questions and point out details. "What does that little cloud in the upper right hand corner look like to you?" Discourage talking at this point, and have each student work on his own, although if two students want to momentarily swap poems for moral support, let them, provided they're being reasonable about it. Again, read the finished products aloud, remarking on the variety of insights this exercise is certain to produce.

III. SOUND. WHAT DOES THIS REMIND YOU OF?

Bring in a recording, one with lots of changes in it, like Stravinsky's "Firebird" or "Petrouchka." It's amazing how many kids have never heard jazz, so you might try the Modern Jazz Quartet or some Dixieland. Avoid Rock, since it has built in connotations for them, and may produce doggerel. Forbid any use of words like music, record, or stereo, and encourage students to write about what they "see" when they listen to the music. For a later session, you may want to try combinations of music and paintings, which can be highly effective.

IV. SMELL BAGS

This one is almost sure-fire. Get a bunch of paper bags, six at a minimum, and put a particular odor or distinctively smelling object in each. In one put a dab of shoe polish, say, and in another a sliced pear, in a third a combination of aftershave and floor wax on a napkin, in one more some creosote. There are a lot of powerful smells in this world, and variety is the keynote. Pass each around the class, starting a second when the first is under way, and have the students keep their eyes closed when they whiff each bag. Make comments: "You'll really love this next one, I had to fight two rats for it at the dump." Anything that will aid in suggestion. The object isn't for the students to guess what the smells are, but to see what memories and events they evoke. Keep the bags moving around the room, and have the writers make notes about the smells that grab them, and form them into poems.

V. TOUCH

As with smell bags, use objects with various textures, and have the writers keep their eyes closed. The object is to awaken memories and feelings. If you like to cook, you might try a

similar exercise with taste, but save it for the last poetry-writing session as this has been known to start parties.

VI. SOUNDS AGAIN

Play a tape of random sounds, some familiar, others strange. Have the students create a poem out of events imagined from the noises. Or, stand at the back of the room, students facing front. Create the sounds by jiggling, crumpling, tapping, various objects.

VII. PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Memory is a great source of poems. Like films, it comes in technicolor. Our recurrent memories are accreted with things that never happened, or that happened at various times, but are recombined. Have each student write a poem about a memory that keeps coming back to him. Ask him to get in at least one example of how it looked, smelled, felt, sounded, and tasted. After the freeing-up exercises above, there'll be stunning results.

The question of whether students should sign their poems ought to be left up to the individual. Some are so proud of what they've done they can't help it. Others may want to use pen names they share with the instructor. But be careful: only one pen name to a customer, or it'll get confusing. An anthology ought to be made from the resulting poems, with everyone represented. Collaborations with the art department work well for covers.

Rhyming should be avoided, since it too often results in doggerel and parodies of "The Night Before Christmas," but if a student must rhyme, see if you can teach him to use off-rhyme to disguise the structure. Any grammatical and "shape-on-the-page" problems can be cleared up when the work is typed for the student anthology, and should be kept very secondary to self-expression. Finally, it's important that the instructor read poems in class continually, and that he read and praise student work freely.

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Examining Descriptive Devices: An Introduction to Poetic Terminology

Elizabeth Carros Keroack

Poetry. How does such an innocuous word manage to strike very real fear into the minds and hearts of most high school students? Seems impossible, doesn't it? Yet every English teacher knows from firsthand experience--either as a years-ago student critic or a present-day dictator of literary study--just how bewildering and uncomfortable the introduction of poetry can be to an unsuspecting, unprepared audience.

Unfortunately, students' fear of poetry often breeds intense dislike of the entire medium. Because poetry has been imbued with an aura of mysterious and incomprehensible origin since time immemorial, it is small wonder that students have difficulty believing that it has its flesh-and-blood beginnings in the labor of people like themselves rather than in the occasional visitations of those so-elusive Muses. Certainly the succintness of form and intensity of feeling characteristic of poetry are often alien to students, but the attempt of the medium to express the true nature of the human condition can be rendered both recognizable and realizable to all sensitive readers with just a modicum of creative effort on the part of the classroom instructor of literature.

Timing, curricular placement, and teacher attitude--these three factors greatly influence the successful introduction of poetry to course content. Two time-tested methods of classroom integration remain sacrosanct, however. One immediately plunges students into poetic content without providing prior instruction in its demonstrated forms and devices, while the other demands student memorization of the definitions and examples of those literary devices implemented by the medium. Both approaches to the study of poetry are "either-or" propositions; neither recognizes students' need to integrate form, function, and audience so that the relevancy of the work may be weighed by the application of its content to their lives and the lives of others.

Easing students into the study of poetry can be best accomplished by divesting it of its more obvious complexities. An approach which favors the in-depth examination of the devices which poetry uses would seem to be a logical starting point, yet it must be one implemented in such a way as to first stimulate student interest in the wealth of poetic expression in their own speech and writing and then in that outside the confines of the classroom. One means of attaining this goal is for the teacher to build a poetry unit which uses as a frame of reference the

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four major functions of writing-- 1) to inform, 2) to persuade, 3) to describe, and 4) to entertain. While all writing really serves as a combination of two or more of the functions, descriptive writing perhaps comes the closest to incorporating within it most of the tenets of "good" poetry. Thus, a general discussion of the four major functions of writing and a specific study of what constitutes effective description prepares students for the eventual introduction of literary devices to course content.

Once discussion of the descriptive process has been effected, the teacher should ask students to describe in writing how they spent their last full evening at home. Several finished pieces, read aloud anonymously, point out many of the characteristics of descriptive writing brought out in discussion--that is, the means by which an author "draws" a verbal "picture" for his audience. Students then exchange their descriptions in pairs; they read a cohort's work and formulate five questions which they feel are not satisfactorily answered by the writing. After the authors of the pieces have had an opportunity to peruse the questions raised by their writing (or lack of it), the teacher helps the class determine the nature of the information not provided for the audience of the pieces. At this time, students begin to gain an awareness of what thorough description can do--stimulate the senses through use of specific and concrete detail used to either create feeling or give meaning to what is being written about. Each author, keeping firmly in mind reader questions and descriptive technique, rewrites his piece with the intent of improving its communicative function. Such an assignment dispels students' belief that description, due to its frequent employment in speech and writing, is easy to create. Instead they find the work involved in fulfilling the evocative and informational potential of description truly time-consuming and thought-provoking.

After the rewrite has been completed, students should be required to circle any suggested or obvious comparisons they have used in writing their descriptive pieces. Those that are found are shared with the class; the teacher stimulates critique of the comparisons by posing questions such as--Why did this particular comparison suggest itself to the author? What does it do for both the reader and the subject of the piece of writing? The descriptive function of the literary device of comparison, to convey meaning with color and specificity, should be made readily apparent by that exercise. From this point, it is but a small jump to the more formal introduction of cliche, simile, and metaphor to the already-primed students.

The language practices of adolescents are fraught with cliches because of students' need to belong to and be accepted by their specific peer group. For this very reason, students enjoy compiling lists of cliches that they themselves and others of their age group use. As they examine their own vocabulary and language use for effective descriptive purposes, students should be encouraged to find new ways of communicating old ideas. If

the teacher assigns each individual to take five cliches from the class list and devise five different (or original) phrases as substitutes, that student who translates "Hey man, what's happening?" to "What's the hot skinny?" is discovering the vast creative potential of language.

Charles Schultz, the cartoonist of "Peanuts" fame, has demonstrated the success of metaphor with his catchy phrase "Happiness is a warm puppy." Now emblazoned upon tee shirts, greeting cards, et al, this metaphor has become almost synonymous with the joyous adventure of childhood. Good metaphor does just that--it injects past experience with new life.

Students are excellent "metaphor-makers" because they possess the ability to look for uniqueness in the often too-mundane world. An exciting culminating exercise for class work on cliche and metaphor is to have students organize a booklet of their best original metaphors. Students using emotions (sadness, anxiety, hope) or other more abstract qualities (honor, greed, pride) upon which to construct their metaphors will create gems like the following for all to read and enjoy--

> Helplessness is having no towels after a shower.
> Depression is watching a beautiful day lose its shimmer under creeping rain clouds.
> Daydreaming is looking into tomorrow and finding today's answers.
> Genius is coming up with a four page paper on "The Smell of Burnt Toast."

Literary devices other than metaphor--personification, hyperbole, understatement, rhyme, alliteration, and onomatopoeia, for example--are also frequently employed by writers, particularly poets, as part of their descriptive technique. One easy way for the teacher to introduce these concepts to students is to demonstrate their very real presence in and value to the world outside of the classroom. What better medium than advertising to do just that? The advertising business is powerful and expansive because it makes use of existing media to sell goods and services to a public that may or may not be receptive to them. Allowing students the opportunity to become critical "commercial consumers" will not only educate them in economics but also in the "poetry" of everyday life.

To gauge students' advertising awareness, the teacher should prepare and administer a quiz of twenty-five questions matching products to slogans. Those most easily identifiable obviously couple poetic expression with successful psychological manipulation. To even further illustrate the exploitation of descriptive devices by advertisers, students need to carefully examine written sales propaganda, especially the variety surreptitiously thrown at the reader in well-known newspapers and periodicals. If students can't supply materials for their own perusal, the school library should be able to provide the classroom teacher

with enough back issues from old subscriptions to keep everyone pleasantly occupied trying to find two commercial examples of each literary device presented thus far. As students search through Time, Newsweek, Redbook, and the like to find and record (with name and date of magazine, page number of advertisement, and actual commercial example) all of these devices they must display an understanding of the unique characteristics of each. Ultimately then, students gain confidence in handling the kind of conceptualization so necessary to a later more "formal" study of poetry.

A last creative project designed to reinforce students' knowledge of those literary devices already introduced is one easily suggested by the greeting card industry and its staggering six billion card-a-year production. What accounts for its daily increase in an age when the cost of paper and postage has skyrocketed? Surely, it is at least in part due to the business' facilitation of communication between people, for although current taste runs toward nostalgia and ecology themes, the standard occasional market certainly continues to be a strong market competitor because of its attention to consumer egocentricity (who doesn't appreciate receiving a birthday greeting?). For this reason, students enjoy developing original ideas into actual "salesworthy" cards.

A cursory study of the market is helpful and may be achieved by either a brief visit to a local stationery store or a close look at cards salvaged by family and/or friends for purposes of reminiscence. Students should be encouraged to observe how message and design work together to appeal to both general and specific audiences. As students begin their own cards, the teacher stipulates that all proposed messages are to be based upon one or more of the literary devices previously discussed, metaphor and/or simile for example. The design, however, may be executed by either the students themselves or by artistically talented acquaintances.

Introducing students to some of the rudimentary elements of poetic structure by the means articulated here may seem rather underhanded to the purist--but the approach is justifiably effective. Would-be fraidycats enter the concentrated study of poetry secure in their awareness of its structural components; the journey into art is no longer incomprehensible, for to understand its workings is to dispel the anxiety surrounding its intent.

PAPERBACK REVIEW

Grandmother's Pictures by Sam Cornish.
Avon Books, 1978. 24 pp. 95¢.

This small book of poems and drawings encompasses the large world of emotions felt by children but rarely analyzed or understood by them until they grow up. It is a sensitive and impressionistic recollection of the seemingly ordinary incidents of the past which become unforgetably precious. Trips to Grandmother's dark apartment, loving her--but not kissing her ("After all, I was a boy..."), and listening so intently to what she said about the pictures of her past are now a part of Sam Cornish's past which we can also share. This is stark, honest poetry, devoid of sentimentality. Its power lies in understatement; the adult will not impose his maturity upon his childhood. Its simplicity of language and Jeanne Johns' excellent illustrations might appeal to younger people, but the maturity of theme almost demands experience from the reader. This book would make a significant contribution to the high school library and/or the appropriate literature curriculum.

Reviewed by Margaret Modeen, East Windsor (CT) High School.

PAPERBACK REVIEW

A Certain Magic by Doris Orgel.
Dell, 1976. 188 pp. $1.25.

A Certain Magic is reminiscent of The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank in that it is about an eleven-year-old girl's discovery of a "copybook" written by her Aunt Trudl when she was a young girl in the turbulent pre-World War II days. However, this story is of an "Anne Frank" who escaped Hitler's terror but suffered fear and alienation in a strange land. Jenny Ehrenteil finds her aunt's copybook by accident just before she is to leave with her parents on a trip to London. The discovery opens up a fascinating world of secrets and mysteries which arouse Jenny's fertile imagination. Jenny's and young Trudl's lives become entwined as Jenny retraces and almost relives the past experiences of her aunt. The "magic" of A Certain Magic seems to be the imagination and determination of two young girls, separated by time and place, that can transform a green stone into a magic emerald and unite two lives in a very special way. This account is easily readable. The story flows naturally from one discovery to another, each page of Trudl's book leading the reader, as well as Jenny, through the experiences and feelings of the lonely refugee. Geared to a pre-teen audience, this ALA Notable Book bridges the gap between Little House on the Prairie and The Outsiders with its examination of loneliness, anxiety, and alienation.

Reviewed by Susan Gudzinski, Hale-Ray High School, Moodus, CT.

Computer-Produced Poetry Vs. the Human Voice

Ellen Strenski

The useful technique of inviting students to compare and contrast a poem and a prose passage, for their different effects, special uses of language, and authors' intentions, is well known. However, we now have another good source for comparison and contrast exercises. And "exercise" is the right word--guided practice intended to develop students' ability to recognize and respond to a persistent narrative voice in a poem. This narrative voice is all-important. It shapes diction and imagery, and it communicates integrity of idea, perspective and feeling. Our most basic objective when teaching poetry should be to help students hear it. But learning to hear this human voice takes practice. A new source for practice exercises is "poetry" generated more or less at random by a computer, in turn based on a program of components blindly selected from anthologies. Here is an example:

> O poet,
> Blush like a rotted skin;
> Brighten like a dusty tower;
> Wail like a happy earthworm;
> Dream like an enormous flood;
> Tremble like a red locomotive;
> Flop like a damp gate!...
> The beaches are praying.
> Listen! How they stifle their enormous lips!...
> The river
> Winks
> And I am ravished.*

What do you think? That is what I asked my students as a review assignment at the end of the poetry unit in their freshman introduction to literature. To make the exercise more fun, and to provide a real opportunity over several days for students to practice responding to the tone by trying out different interpretations, I set the assignment up as a game. At the end of one class I handed out a ditto with two unsigned poems, the computer piece #1, and another, #2, which just happened to be a recent poem by Philip Levine from the New Yorker. Any good poem, not in a textbook or already studied in class, would do. I explained that one poem was written by a machine and one by a recognized American poet, and asked students to read and study both carefully

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*Excerpted from "The Meditation of IBM 7094-7040 DCS," programmed by Professor Marie Barroff, Yale University, from Marie Barroff, "Computer as Poet," Yale Alumni Magazine, January 1971. Reprinted with permission.

for next class, and to discuss them, if they liked, with family and friends.

The next class I gave students two questions to answer in writing. One asked them to choose which poem was produced with a computer, and which was written by a human. The second question asked them to defend their preference, which one they liked better, emphasizing the poem's effectiveness rather than their taste. Once they developed a position and handed in their answers as a preliminary step, students were ready to open up the assignment for general debate and discussion, modifying their original interpretations in light of other readings of these two texts.

I want to recommend this exercise strongly. It does have disadvantages; students tend to be suspicious of some trick. Their suspicion, however, can be quieted by reassuring students that you are more interested in their reasons for choosing rather than whether or not they choose correctly.

The advantages, on the other hand, are many--for students, and for teachers. First, this exercise brings to the surface in a very dramatic way many common misconceptions students harbor about poetry (such as what count as suitable subjects, tone, rhythm, placement and sequence of words, or imagery in a poem; and the relationship between ambiguity and vagueness or confusion). It is surely a common enough frustration for teachers to sense that students are missing some main point(s) in a poem, but to feel at a loss how to address these misconceptions, how to help students get a specific grip on some feature of a poem without simply legislating a party-line or handing out passwords to be memorized. This comparison exercise can provide just such a handle, especially when alternative approaches are recommended by other students rather than dictated by the teacher.

Secondly, this assignment gives students practice in responding to imagery and ambiguity by trying out possible interpretations and then testing them against experience, theirs and others' in the class. As such, it forces students to go beyond prosody and memorizing terms or even poems. Who, after all, really cares if students can define "iambic pentameter" if they cannot hear a human voice? But this ability to respond to a human voice does not come automatically; it requires practice in reading and experiencing poetry. This exercise provides such guided practice.

It can also show us how we teachers often tend to make unwitting critical assumptions of taste and value. For instance, what about students who read (and enjoy) the computer poem ironically, who genuinely delight in the absurd similes, who are challenged and stimulated by them? This exercise can be an illuminating experience for all.

From Anathema to Approbation

William Hall

Poetry, that traditional anathema of students! How English teachers wish it held the importance of math and science in student study priorities. Why can't it? Why not approach poetry reading as the same kind of intellectual skill? If we assume poetry to be form and meaning, then reading it utilizes the same process, i.e. discovering parts that logically sum up to a whole, or, solving for the unknown element. With this attitude, reading poetry ceases to be a passive, dreamy plodding through line after line of print. Instead, it becomes an active search for concrete form revealing abstract concept.

Such is the premise of SQFR: Reading Literature Critically, a text dealing with reading short stories, poetry, drama, and novels as an analytical skill. It draws this premise from the formalistic criticism school and Francis Robinson's SQ3R: Effective Reading. In turn the poetry section is the product, primarily, of Poetry: An Introduction to Its Form and Art by Norman Friedman and Charles McLaughlin (Harpers, 1962). Although space precludes a full explanation of the SQFR process of reading a poem's form to reveal its meaning, the student sample that follows illustrates each of the phases: Survey--overview the text to detect cues to the matters of form; Question--develop questions resulting from the survey to guide the closer reading; Forecast--project an hypothesis for the work's final meaning; Read--actively read to answer the questions and validate the forecast.

AN SQFR MODEL READING

Here Daniel Neiman, a student, demonstrates how the SQFR procedure can be applied to the reading of a poem, Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." This reading was a part of his course work in his senior year at Newington High School, Newington, Connecticut, as Neiman was beginning to develop his use of SQFR.

"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"

SURVEY:

1. Title

   stopping: cessation of movement; implied permanence; possibly a pause which in itself is motion

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William Hall teaches English at Newington (CT) High School. The model included here is from Mr. Hall's book, SQFR: Reading Literature Critically, published by Lorrah & Hitchcock Publishers, Inc., Murray, Kentucky, and is copyright (c) 1978 by the author.

in place; present participle implies motion or impermanence of the condition.

by: not in, but adjacent to, in close proximity.

woods: nature, closed and shrouded.

on: meaning "during"; suggests an impermanent condition.

snowy: white, therefore purity or sterility; possibly death because winter is the dead season; perhaps an image of peace because of the silence of a snow fall.

evening: end of day; decline of day therefore possibly means dying; almost night but not quite; limbo time; perhaps a connection with limbo suggested by "stopping."

2. Physical divisions
four stanzas @ four lines

3. Words:
downy: soft and fluffy feathers or texture like the same.

4. Sentences:
   a. line one: complex using two noun clauses.
   b. lines two-four: compound using present participle and infinitive phrases.
   c. lines five-eight: objective complement using infinitive phrase expanded with compound prepositional phrases.
   d. lines nine and ten: simple, using infinitive phrase expanded with an adverbial clause.
   e. lines eleven and twelve: simple, expanded by prepositional phrases using compound objects.
   f. line thirteen: simple, using triple predicate adjectives.
   g. lines fourteen-sixteen: begins with "but" as a link with line thirteen expressing a contradictory position; simple structure using a triple, compound direct object, each expanded with infinitives.

5. Type of communication:
indirect communication--an imagined human experience. A traveler in a horse drawn sleigh on a snowy evening stops to watch some woods he does not own fill up with snow. The woods seem more inviting than his journey, but after some thought he decides to keep going to fulfill his promises to others.

6. Mechanical divisions:
#1-uncertainty over his right to watch someone else's property. Lines 1 and 2
#2-the tension is resolved when he decides that the owner is not present. Lines 2 and 3
#3-projects upon his horse his own uncertain thought

about the wisdom of stopping at mid-journey. Lines 5-8

#4-continues to project on the horse his own uncertainty about the wisdom of stopping in the dead cold winter journey. Lines 9-12

#5-returns to his desire or fascination with the woods. Line 13

#6-in these three final lines he resolves the tension between his desire and the wisdom of his desire. He decides against his desires and continues his journey. He repeats the resolve of his dicision in line 16. Climax of the little drama and the psychological struggle occurs in line 14 where he contradicts (via the use of "but" as a link) his foregoing desires and uncertainties.

7. Mechanical unification
Rise and fall of psychological tensions; each is more tense than the other until line 14 where it climaxes and lines 15 and 16 where the tension recedes in a denouement.

QUESTION:

1. Title
   a. Why does Frost use the present participle, "stopping," instead of the past, "stopped"?
   b. What does the setting figure, "snowy" and "woods," mean?
   c. Is "evening" a time or cycle figure?
   d. Why does this incident take place in the seasonal figure of "winter"?

2. Vocabulary
   a. Why is it so simple?

3. Sentence structure
   a. Why so much compounding?
   b. Why such heavy use of infinitives?
   c. Why is line one the only complex structure?

4. Type of communication
   a. Why does he use this human experience rather than others?

5. Mechanical divisions
   a. Why four stanzas?
   b. Why four lines to each stanza?
   c. Is there any connection with "winter" as the fourth season?
   d. Does the four part configuration appear in the form of the poem in any other ways?
   e. Why are his own thoughts divided from himself in lines 5-12 and projected upon the horse as the horse's thoughts?

f. Why does he reunite his thoughts with himself in lines 13-16?

FORECAST:

1. Artistic service forms
   a. technique
      (1) point of view--present dramatic
      (2) mood--tension of indecision
      (3) tone--?
      (4) order--chronological
      (5) selection of parts:
          . primary--indecision
          . secondary--decision
          . representational--doubts projected on the horse; repetition of the last line
      (6) emphasis--primary parts (indecision); last line of commitment to the decision

   b. style
      (1) diction--neutral--it's everyman's condition; he uses infinitives to indicate the impermanence of the condition; struggle and life is infinite
      (2) figures:
          . speech--setting: woods release from burden
            motion: stopping--contemplation; limbo; doubt, indecision
            season: winter--death or dead season
            cycle: evening--limbo; neither night nor day
            color: white--death
                   black--peace; sleep; release; death

2. Mechanical forms
   a. Frost uses form stanzas @ four lines to parallel the four seasons and the fourth in which the incident takes place. Also, it suggests the cycle figure which in turn hints at the eternal struggle that human existence is; it knows no end; perhaps neither does human existence.
   b. Rising and falling unity indicates the two possible alternatives to the indecision condition; also reflects the mind's logical pattern of the cause and effect.

3. Contextual forms
   a. Condition or abdication of duty as a surcease from care, burden, obligation, but also as limbo, indecision and doubt.
   b. Condition of duty as moral responsibility to others; a tough plodding struggle with reward only at life's end (reflected in the promises and the miles).

4. Organizing form or principle
An imagined human experience imparting the knowledge that it is true that humans often pause in their lives seeking release from their responsibilities which seem overpowering. However, after some indecision and doubt they carry on mainly because they have obligations to others before they can turn to satisfying themselves. Making that decision is difficult and they must constantly remind themselves as to why they must keep going.

READ:

1. Technique
   a. point of view--present dramatic lets us get inside the pause, the indecision as it occurs; also we finally experience the motion of the "to go" in the denouement in lines 15 and 16.
   b. mood--the tension of indecision shifts in line 14 to the relief of decision and finally the secure feeling of the commitment in lines 15 and 16.
   c. tone--matter of fact, this is the truth, let's get on with our lives as tough as they are; last line indicates his sense of sympathy in that the traveler has to remind himself of his duty if he is to keep going.
   d. order--chronological order reflects the eternal cycle and evolution of human struggle, decisions, commitments, each evolving out of the preceding ones; it's the normal order of experience.
   e. selection--primary element of experience is indecision and doubt; the secondary element is the resulting decision; the decision takes no time; the deliberation and doubt does; the representational parts are used because perhaps in order to objectify out the situation we have to project in upon others to see how they would act and react; such examination makes the final decision obvious.
   f. emphasis--primary parts and their representation are emphasized to indicate the agony of indecision that is the greater portion of life.

2. Style
   a. diction--forecast seems consistent
   b. figures--
      (1) language
         . inversion
            "Whose woods these are I think I know" reflects the abnormal condition of the opening stanza where he is stopping; this inverts the normal condition of keeping the promises by going the miles; also, it might be used to set the rhythm and/or rhyme.
         . parallelism and balance
            "promises to keep/and miles to go. . ./and

miles to go. . ." reflects the oneness and uniformity that evolves in these lines where the commitment is entered into.

(2) speech

. personification

"My little horse must think it queer. . ." assigns the human ability of thinking to the horse; actually the thoughts are the traveler's; this becomes his conscience and rational examination of his emotions; rational beings don't contemplate abdication of duty.

. simile

"As if to ask if there is some mistake" compares this with the harness shaking the bells; another way of relating his conscience outside himself for examination and feedback.

. symbol

woods--peace, release from duty, death as the ultimate release.

village--security and comfort awaiting traveler at the end of the journey; place where promises finally are kept.

His house--owner of death (woods) and reward at the end of journey.

stopping--contemplation of suicide (premature death before his journey is done).

snow--cold, sterile, frozen life, death-like.

horse--(1) animal world whose instinct is to keep going;
(2) becomes traveler's rational, conscience examining the emotional situation objectively.

farmhouse--life, warmth, security.

frozen lake--static life, dormant life (appearing death-like).

darkest evening--end of day, season, light, year, therefore the end of life; it is the death of everything except his journey of promises.

harness--control.

bells--conscience, reminds traveler of his promises; also it's a mistake to abdicate duty to others.

easy wind--pleasant death sounds, the opposite of bells.

downy flake--soft comfort that death and abdication seem to offer.

woods (lovely, dark and deep)--confirms woods as symbol of abdication of life's duties' therefore it is suicidal death he considers before finishing out the journey of duties laid before him.

promises--moral obligation to others.
miles--tough process of fulfilling promises; life's span of struggle.
sleep--just reward or release from the agony of fulfilling duties to others; this reward is at the end of the struggle (miles) (perhaps in the village); therefore sleep is natural death as opposed to suicidal death.

c. rhythm
   (1) iambic-tetrameter
      (a) again the appearance of four as in four iambs to the line; suggests a wholeness despite the momentary pause.
      (b) iambic foot suggests the conflict between abdication and duty.
      (c) consistency of foot and line again suggests the plodding, monotonous miles of the journey underlying even the seeming interruption of the pause.

d. sound
   (1) assonance, consonance and alliteration
      (a) 1st stanza: the first two lines seem balanced between sound and subject. There is an abundance of the soft "s" consonant sound, while talking about the woods and the house in the village so as to indicate that the two opposites have the same desirable feature of release from the present burden; the consonant and sometimes alliterative "w" sounds accompany the wooing of the traveler's attention to the woods; the assonant "o" sounds have the same effect.
      (b) 2nd stanza: the wooing effect of sound in the first stanza is not evident here; without specific sound devices perhaps we experience the absence of emotion; this is the rational conscience speaking in this stanza.
      (c) 3rd stanza: all three sound types appear in this stanza as they appear in stanza 1; the harness bells lines have heavy use of the assonant "i" and short "e" that are similar; also, the consonant "s" is obvious in these two lines containing the sounds of rational conscience; however, the last two lines that contain the wooing of the emotions to the death image of the woods and snow also contain the same alliterative "s" but now add the assonant "o."
      (d) 4th stanza: little or no sound imagery. 1st lines consonance, alliteration (dark and deep); this adds almost a sinister allure to death, a paradoxical evil-beauty; next three lines nothing of note, back to reality, commitment as unattractive as it may be.

(2) rhyme

(a) all rhyming lines are single, full, masculine rhyme reflecting, as does the consistent rhythm pattern, the underlying plodding flow of life despite the surface pause of suicidal contemplation.

(b) scheme

. 1st stanza A A B A
. 2nd stanza B B C B
. 3rd stanza C C D C
. 4th stanza D D D D

Here again we find the configuration of four. In each stanza one sound dominates the other sound in a three to one ratio indicating again the two alternatives available to the traveler and further indicating that one alternative is the favorite of the moment. However, stanza two's dominating sound is the losing sound of the previous stanza and so is this the case in stanza three. This suggests that the deliberation is not finished and is evolving toward a decisive conclusion in the last stanza. Only the last stanza has only one rhyming sound which has evolved out of stanza three's losing sound; the sweep of the winter wind and downy flake becomes the sound of (first) the final death contemplation and (finally) in the last three lines the sound of decision and commitment to the decision. Hence, the rhyme scheme keeps moving onward, never stopping until the end, as ultimately does the traveler. In stanza four the traveler has reached a decision and there is no need to lead into another stanza, and there is no need for one sound mismatched with the other four.

SUMMARY:

1. The QUESTIONS led to an inquiry as to why Frost uses the artistic forms as he does. This in turn led to an interpretation of the forms relative to the contextual forms and organizing form. As can be seen in the READ notes, the answers to the QUESTIONS are consistent with the mechanical, contextual, and organizing forms.

2. The FORECAST appears to have been basically accurate. The READ notes bear out its validity insofar as the artistic forms do serve the contextual and organizing forms and contradictory explanations for their use do not seem to be apparent. Also, the numerous interlocking of various forms in service to one another and in the specific form they take make a grand design of common organization apparently supportive of a common hypothesis. All forms interrelate to present an imagined human experience that imparts the knowledge that it is true humans pause in the plodding continuum

of their lives to contemplate suicide as a release from the agonizing burden of life. However, they decide against suicide and opt instead to keep on going because of the moral obligations they have to others.

From this student's sample reading, we see that SQFR turns poetry reading into a tangible process like that of algebra, geometry, or the sciences. Other arguments such as appreciation, culture, self-discovery are standard but of little meaning to the pragmatic student who wants to get the job done with measurable outcomes. Ultimately, what are we after in teaching poetry to students? We are after an analytical skill. Deciphering word problems, explaining relationships of parts to a whole, solving for an unknown element sharpens the mind. Functioning intellectually on more complex levels is what learning and teaching are all about. If the poetry is long forgotten, a mind capable of manipulating masses of detail and concepts easily remains. In this light, poetry reading changes from anathema to approbation.

PAPERBACK REVIEW

Great Shark Stories edited by Valerie and Ron Taylor with Peter Goadby. Bantam Books, 1978. 403 pp. $2.50.

In a disjointed presentation of first and second-hand accounts, Valerie and Ron Taylor explore the mystique of the shark. The authors offer graphic descriptions of sharks circling in frenzied fury gorging themselves on bloodied carcasses. Using personal experience and excerpts from a variety of fictional and nonfictional sources, the Taylor's share the terrifying beauty of the shark with its unhesitating instinct to attack any fish or animal. However, the reader may weary of the repetitive depictions of evisceration caused by the sharks' explosive gluttony. The recurring images of the attacks and the attempt at metaphorical symbolization of the sharks fall short of producing a Melvillian malevolence. Unfortunately, Great Shark Stories surfaces as an ode to watery violence riding on the waves of Jaws II. If any appeal exists for the reader, it is the vicarious experiencing of contacts with this primordial fish and its ability to titillate the reader's fear of unprovoked attack and powerlessness. The book can only serve as a bibliographic supplement for a secondary English course, perhaps as a representative sampling of prose dealing with man versus nature.

Reviewed by Larry Nocera, Rocky Hill (CT) High School.

Brainstorming a Poem

Thomas G. Devine

Teaching a difficult poem is often a magnificent ego-trip for all of us. Few of life's delights exceed the satisfaction of taking a high school class through, say, Yeats' "Sailing to Byzantium" or Dylan Thomas's "The Hunchback in the Park" or the commonly anthologized Eliot poems. To stand before a group of young people and lead them skillfully, point-by-point, through the obscurities and the anfractuous passages, to see "the lights go on" in student faces, to feel, as the class leaves the room, the knowledge that no one "understood" the poem when the group came in but that, as they leave (almost) everyone sees the meaning of Yeats or Thomas or Eliot--these are among the greatest rewards of the teacher of English.

However, let's admit it, there are some (many) students who do not share our joy. For them the class that thrilled us so much was dull, even deadly. To be sure, they do now have a vague notion of what the poem is about, but the process of obtaining the glimmer was too much like all other schoolwork: teacher-dominated, an essentially passive experience, disassociated from their lives, their energies, their intellects, their feelings.

Some teachers will protest: not true! They, they will say, use the explication type lesson with great skill; they ask probing, even exciting questions; they constantly relate the poem to the students' lives; they introduce entertaining but enlightening anecdotes; they enhance the question-answer recitations with visuals, with recordings, with dramatizations. They succeed--at least within the constraints set by the school environment--at least with some students.

The advantages of the explication-type lesson are obvious: it does fit the school environment as we know it; it does work for some skilled teachers; it does help some verbally-able, highly motivated students. The disadvantages are equally obvious: this traditional approach to the poem does turn off more students than it turns on; its long-lasting effects seem minimal; it is probably more beneficial for teacher ego than student learning.

An alternative to the classroom approach to a poem exists. For want of a better term, it has been called "brainstorming." Its values have been demonstrated; its potential has not yet been properly assessed. This approach may best be explained in a series of steps:

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1. The teacher confesses that he/she has a fairly good notion of what "Sailing to Byzantium" (or "The Hunchback in the Park" or "Gerontion") means but a careful survey of the critics indicates that there is considerable difference of opinion in critical circles.

2. The teacher then distributes the poem, reads it aloud, talks a bit about it, encourages students to talk about it. He/she may suggest a personal interpretation and points at which various critics diverge in the critical woods.

3. As class organizer--rather than lecturer/specialist--the teacher next breaks the classs up into four or five groups of four or five and appoints in each group a recorder. The directions given are simple: "In the next ten (or sixty) minutes come up with an explanation or interpretation of the poem. Don't squelch anyone's ideas, but try always to find evidence within the poem to support your ideas."

4. While the group "brainstorms," the teacher floats from group to group, acting now not so much as class organizer as listener-consultant.

5. After the appropriate time (ten minutes for a relatively simple poem or as much as an hour for a more difficult one) the groups are (or may be) placed in a large circle from which group recorders report on the discussion within the groups. The entire class is encouraged to challenge, evaluate, support the individual readings. A consensus may be obtained; it may not.

6. The teacher finally re-reads the poem, presents a teacher interpretation, reviews critical opinions, summarizes the points of consensus and/or points of difference.

There are teachers who will say that such an approach is madness, sheer madness: "Students who don't know much if anything to begin with are encouraged, actually encouraged, to differ with the teacher, with the great critics! Students are encouraged to talk! to move their chairs! to set themselves up on a par with trained, expert teachers!" Of course, a brainstorming approach is laden with problems: What if the students don't play the game? What if they sit dumb in the groups? What if they talk about "other matters"? What if they come up with a strikingly new interpretation? What if...? What if...?

Teachers who have tried brainstorming poetry note that its advantages outweigh these disadvantages. Brainstorming, when managed well, maximizes student involvement. Students are no longer as passive; they no longer sit waiting for the teacher's ideas, the teacher's questions, the teacher's insights. They now have opportunities (in the relatively small groups) to suggest, challenge, ask questions. The poem is no longer sacred text to be studied; it is living language to be thought through, to stimulate, to pique, to enjoy. The teacher--and this may be the greatest advantage of brainstorming--is less the authority-figure/expert

and more the facilitator/guide, and, as a consequence, may grow along with the students (a situation not characteristic of traditional approaches).

Brainstorming a poem, then, offers a viable alternative to the ego-trip for teachers. It is an approach that offers much to students, to the poems, and to the teacher. It is one worth considering as the sides of the rut seem to grow higher.

PAPERBACK REVIEW

Hey Kid! by Rita Golden Gelman, illustrated by Carol Nicklaus, and There's a Hippopotamus Under My Bed by Mike Thaler, illustrated by Ray Cruz. Avon Camelot, 1978. 30 pp., unpaginated. $1.25 each.

If a kid's book can keep me turning the pages or make me laugh, it's a winner. Each of these very short picture/story books did both of those things for me. Not only that, but because they're so re-readable, I keep asking my first grade son if he wants me to read these to him before bed. Most second and third graders will probably love reading these "Snuggle & Read" books to themselves. "Hey, Kid!" are the clandestinely whispered words which introduce the Kid to the white and black and gray heavily locked box out of which comes a "thing"--ghost-shaped, fuzzy, friendly, and most of all talkative. It sings and sings, and talks, and sings; and talks, and talks, and talks through dinner, during TV-watching, through the night, at breakfast, and ad nauseam through the day until, you guessed it, the Kid finds a crate in which to lock the thing and heads out of town in search of someone to whom he says, "Hey, Kid!" The story, told in alternately rhyming lines, is delightfully illustrated.

Thaler's unnamed protagonist is equally naive when one day a hippopotamus follows him home from school. What do you do with any stray that follows you home? Take it in certainly. Let it sit in your father's favorite chair, give it a bath, try to hide it from your folks, let it sleep under your bed. A hippo? Hilarious illustrations (the hippo stuck in the tub! disguised as a book shelf/planter/lamp!) and an understated text highlight this book.

Although these are my two favorites, you ought also to investigate the four other books in Avon's "Snuggle & Read" series: Heather's Feathers by Leatie Weiss, illustrated by Ellen Weiss; Kate's Secret Riddle Book by Sid Fleischman, illustrated by Barbara Bottner; Jasper and the Hero Business by Betty Horvath, illustrated by Don Bolognese; and The Ghost with the Halloween Hiccups by Stephen Mooser, illustrated by Tomie De Paola.

Reviewed by Don Gallo, CCSC.

An Outline for a Crafted Writing Course

Peter Gower

Suggestions abound on how to start students actually writing. But a half-dozen years of teaching a "creative writing" course suggest that much preparatory work should be done by teachers before the student is even expected to write. I am not particularly concerned whether the student writes verse or prose. If the writing is carefully crafted, and the writer "manipulates language for its own sake," the distinctions between verse and prose are no longer clear. Therefore I use "writing" rather than trying to be more specific.

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

I believe that the introduction may be the most important part of encouraging effective writing from students. Although teachers want to rush in and get the class moving, a writing unit needs a slow start. The teacher should spend time finding out about the students' likes and dislikes, and why they are taking the course. Teachers must let themselves be known to their students. They could talk about and read their own favorite writings (maybe their own) or show slides of places explaining why they like those places. Teachers should provide students the opportunities to play with words, look at thesauruses, synonyms, antonyms, and dictionaries. Students should look at puns and word games and children's books which play with words. The students must become interested in words and the teacher before they will become interested in working with either.

TIME

After the careful introduction of teacher and words and students to each other, I think that a teacher still has to restrain a student from rushing ahead. The most difficult concept for a student--and many teachers--to understand is that time is needed if writing is to be carefully crafted. It is impossible to say exactly how much time, but probably at least a month is needed between start of first draft and handing in a much revised paper. Obviously the revision could be endless--as with Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass. But as so often in this course, concessions have to be made, and at some point the student has to hand in work for evaluation. The situation is not unlike that of a resident playwright working in conjunction with a troupe of actors to craft their play. He may feel that what he first writes is the best possible. But as the actors use the words, speak them

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and act them, so they and the playwright realize how these words can and should be changed to become more effective. Only with time can a reader hear and think where improvements can be made. But that First Night will arrive and the words must be publicly shared.

With experience that revision period decreases and seasoned journalists can write quickly and effectively. A course should let a student write, revise the next day, and then put the writing away for a week. Then it can be looked at again and cultivated and handed in for evaluation within another week. Too often students want to hand in first drafts for evaluation, without realizing that revision through second, third, fourth, and fifth drafts is as much a part of writing as is putting pen to paper. Too often teachers want to collect in work quickly to make sure that the student is working. The same teacher will not let a student think freely; the student must be writing down thoughts, even though writing, because it is so slow, can inhibit thinking.

INCENTIVES

Now that students have the time, they need an incentive to write. The teacher must be very careful in guiding the student. If the writing is to be transactional/functional, then the topic to be explained must be within the student's experience, not "How To Walk On The Moon." If the writing is to be poetic/imaginative, then it probably should be autobiographical. Britton[1] describes this writing in part as "reconstructing the past," Early[2] as "sharing with someone else." There must be a past to be shared. Macrorie[3] suggests "seven years of distance" between event and time of writing, and Moffett[4] has suggested that writers should start with interior monologue. Together these would suggest our first piece of poetic/imaginative writing: "Think of something that happened about seven years ago that really affected you. Recall or retell that incident so that the reader will become involved in what happened."

Perhaps the writer should be reminded of nothing more at this point. It is a first assignment and both writer and teacher need to know where the writer is. Students who find the assignment "wrong" for them should be allowed to adapt the instructions or write on something else, but teachers will have to make individual judgements on students for whom the assignments are never right. Teachers should not have expectations of what they will receive, and they must be willing to receive a wide variety of writings.

A TEN DAY ORGANIZATION PLAN

The student now has a piece of writing, and our course objective is to make that self-expression more effective and more personal. I would suggest that the writer look at the course in terms of ten-meeting units to encourage that improvement. Such units could be strung together to make a longer course, or could

be used in a regular English course--but a teacher must realize that rapport is built up over a period of time, and lack of it may make independent units less effective. This plan will suggest how each piece of writing will progress through those ten days:

DAY 1: Teacher introduction of a narrowly defined mode, and of subject matter if necessary. Student writes, completes, and contemplates first draft.

DAY 2: Teacher introduces a revision technique. Student revises and writes second draft.

DAY 5: Student reads work to group, listens to comments.

DAY 6: Student writes third draft, remembering Day 5 comments. Student may want to continue talking to individual critics in the group.

DAY 10: Teacher reviews mode and technique. Student revises and writes fourth (and final?) draft.

DAY 1: Student hands in all drafts and final copy so that the teacher can see the revision process, as well as the final version.

At first there will be students who will be sure that they are finished on Day 1. Much patience is needed to persuade them that they are not. Day 2 should suggest how they can do better. Day 5 certainly will.

The narrowly defined mode and the revision techniques need further explanation. Moffett[5] suggests a progression of modes through which a writer progresses. Students may find some of his recommended modes very difficult to handle, especially in poetry, and for a less experienced class some of them should be omitted. Poetic forms which seem to bring most success are the haiku and other Oriental verse which places severe restrictions on the number of words which can be used, shaped verse, concrete verse, and, later in the course, free verse. But teachers should feel free to adapt these as long as the first draft of the task can be completed in an hour. The teacher should not ask the student in this part of the course to "write a narrative ballad" or "write a sonnet."

Both Macrorie[6] and Odell[7] suggest a range of revision techniques. Each teacher should plan what seems to be the best order for using these techniques. I would guess that there is no best order. The teacher should remember that progress is slow in improving and that not everything will be accomplished immediately. It therefore seems best to spread the techniques out through the course. Odell suggests looking in turn at focus, contrast, classification, change, physical context and sequence. Macrorie talks about tightening, generalization, stopping and starting, sharpening, the hook, carelessness, weasel words, repeat and vary, and

indirectness. Their explanations and examples are excellent and should be read by anybody who wants to hone language. They are probably more concerned with prose, but their ideas are readily adaptable to verse.

Teachers can modify the procedures on days one and two to suit their own preferences. Some may want to start by showing "model poetry"; some may decide that model poetry sets an unattainable standard and should be avoided. It is a teacher's choice and becomes easier as the teacher better knows the class. The groups for day five can be chosen in a number of ways, and again there is no best method. Heterogeneous groups may work, but students often prefer working with friends. The groups should contain from four to seven students so that each student can read and hear some comments in a class period. On day six, individuals can pursue particular comments that were made as they write their third draft. The day five activity will be embarrassing at first until people are willing to share their work with others. Moffett's monologue and Macrorie's reminiscences may produce some very private writing; but since all in the group have similar work, a sympathetic teacher will breach the embarrassment while respecting the privacy. Always, teachers are attempting to make the writing vibrate with personal voice, and not sound as though it has come from a committee, or the collected cliches of humanity. But after all of this revision there may be yet another problem: "One has only learnt to get the better of words/ For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which/ One is no longer disposed to say it."[8]

There is no time specifically allotted for returning writings. The course should be informal and flexible enough that this can be done on any of the days explained so far, or on any of the other days, or outside of course hours. Teachers may include so much written commentary and suggestion that the student does not have to talk over the paper and the return takes only a short while. Or teachers might want to spend a day talking with students.

The other five days would be planned thus:

Days 3 and 8: film

Days 4 and 9: students' personal writing

Day 7: reading and/or listening.

Days 4 and 9 leave the student free at crafting whatever writing they wish. It may be a further draft of writing already evaluated by the teacher, or new attempts at past or new modes. Students should be allowed to hand in this work for evaluation as and when they want to. Day 7 is a class for sharing. It should start with the teacher reading pieces of effective writing to the class. Teachers should then encourage students to bring their favourite pieces from anywhere, ranging from one line graffito to excerpts from plays and novels. The intent is to give the writer's

ear and mind practice: students should have paper to note down favourite phrases. Days 3 and 8 are similarly designed to succour the imagination. As wide a range of films as possible should be used, varying in length, mode, and subject matter. While writers "reconstruct past experiences" they may also "construct imagined events." One way of helping them to do this, and of helping them to expand their imaginations, is to give them vicarious experiences through film that they can contemplate. The film and the reading/listening periods are placed before the personal writing periods so that new ideas may be developed in those writing periods. Again, writers should have paper at hand to make comments during the films.

This ten day model must be regarded as an outline only, a skeleton, and the body may take many different shapes. As a course progresses, adaptations will be made. But a skeleton is essential, or the course will become as flabby as some of the first drafts. While you cannot guarantee that great writing will result, you can show those who are cynical about the possibility of teaching writing that the problem can at least be positively approached.

FOOTNOTES

1. James Britton, Language and Learning, London: Pelican Books, 1972, p. 104.

2. Margaret Early, unpublished lecture in Toronto, 1978.

3. Ken Macrorie, Writing to be Read, New York: Hayden, 1972, p. 72.

4. James Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968, p. 123.

5. Moffett, Ibid, p. 123.

6. Macrorie, op. cit., pp. 25, 60, 82, 91, 119, 137, 145, 195, and 228.

7. Lee Odell, in Charles Cooper and Lee Odell, Evaluating Writing, Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 1977, pp. 108, 111, 113, 116, 118 and 119.

8. T. S. Eliot, Four Quartets, East Coker, lines 176-178.

The Trip to the Crossroads: Teaching the Exceptional Student Poet

Tom Liner

I want to share an experience in poetry with you--and make some suggestions about teaching poetry to talented high school students. It was late in an afternoon in early autumn, and I was still in my classroom reading student journals, trying to finish that final stack to return to a class of juniors the next day. No one was around but me, and the janitor working down the hall. A good, quiet time to work and think. I was reading Jimmy's journal.

Jimmy was a tall, lanky kid, a quiet and sometimes intense student who sat in the back of the room. He was a competitive swimmer, and a good student. We had talked a little about canoeing and back-packing, shared interests. He liked to write, and I looked forward to reading his journal each week. I knew that he wrote poetry sometimes, but I had seen little of it. In a large class with a lot of work to do, the good and quiet student is lost in the daily uproar. But the writing in his journal that particular week seemed more sensitive than usual to the details of his physical surroundings and to the subtle changes at that time of the year.

I can't remember exactly what it was that struck me from his journal. I think it was the fragment of a poem he had started but abandoned for other things. It was only five or six lines long and stopped in mid-line. But it was good. I looked out the classroom windows where the wind played with sunlight in the trees. And in Jimmy's journal I wrote a note praising the fragment, then I quickly wrote this.

Perspective

maple leaves:
each one holds
a piece of sky,
and the earth
in its place --

from this window.

The next morning the journals were returned in the usual buzz of excitement I've come to expect when a class gets involved in the journal, some laughter and smiles at what I'd written responding to them, some groans at my bad jokes, some arguments over

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points for credit, some "Hey, look at this" to neighbors across the aisle. I gave Jimmy his.

"You going to finish that poem? It's real good."

"Nosir, that one doesn't feel right."

He smiled when he read my poem but said nothing. I was disappointed. "Well, so much for that," I thought.

But two days later he came into the room beaming and thrust his journal into my hands.

"I wrote a good one this time. Want to read it?"

PEEP SHOW

creakcreak slam
as the door opens m swallows

Howdy Pete so Pete ducks under the senile no-pest strip
m pulls up a cokecase

Whazat Pete cause Pete's bin stackin wheat but still says
he feels good as he spies the flask stickin outta
Pete's overhauls

he smiles standin neath n old Malboro sign thatzall faded
face dirty m hard as Pete's calloused palms

I knew that, at 16 years old, Jimmy had the fine touch for detail of a full fledged poet. But he refused to share his poetry with the class. For all his skill, he was always shy about his writing and never willing to read it aloud in the classroom, which was and is a common practice in my room. It was much later that he was willing to share it in print.

But I had to decide how to respond to this poem. The trusty red pen was out of the question. I believe that modeling is important in the writing class. If I am to teach kids that writing matters, then I have to write often with them and share my writing with them often. Not like some stuffy academician showing the ignorant how it's properly done, but as another writer--maybe a little more experienced and a little more street-wise with words--but still another writer struggling with the complex task of writing, and enjoying it sometimes too. So there seemed to be no help for it. The only response, as a writer, I could make to Jimmy's poem was to write a poem in return.

Cross Roads

holding the white line off my left foot
topping the rise easy
about 5 miles out of Braselton

TEXACO BILL GROGAN'S Gen. Merchandise
the signs, where the roads cross
amid the kudzu and cornfields, pines
I've stopped here for gas before
nobody says much
a halfdozen men beside the gas-pumps
astraddle coke crates and nail kegs
one leans against the grey store-front planks
and cuts curling slivers
from a stick with a Kabar held in a thick hand
his eyes under the John Deere cap are steady
suspicious of the motorcycle
he spits tobacco juice into the dust

"ain't that thang kinda dangerous, boy?"
I free my head from the helmet
and nod at him and smile

but he is satisfied
the eyes are silent

he flicks them away across the hot fields
dismissing me from his concern
with the warning

and I leave
my head imprisoned again in the helmet
leaning smoothly to the road
the white line running fast at my foot

they recede quickly in the twin mirrors
shrinking backwards

but I know the cross roads very well
and I know I'll stop there
next time through

It wasn't as tight as Jimmy's poem, but I liked it. And what it began was a dialogue in poetry that continued that entire year, and the most rewarding writing experience with a single student that I have ever had. A week later Jimmy wrote a poem on deer hunting. I responded with one about back-packing. And so it went.

It was the next spring when Jimmy wrote this beautifully complex poem from his experiences canoeing the Chattahoochee River in north-east Georgia.

The Nexus

the river/here/below the bridge
    it never changes--
    new faces and water and habits/but
    /always the same river

the fighter/the fulcrum
that cannot/give without/taking
or take without giving
it is/its own slave/and/it
pulls us in
onto the treadmill/the sluice/the canoe as it settles
breaks/through the leaves--
    a pasquinade of success
    /reflected from the water/again--sliding forward
and hearing a roar
the bend in the river can't quite contain/develop
    into a frothing fist/looking quickly--
    then in--

a drawstroke to/the right
we miss one/rock but hit another/and another
sending to safety/us in our canoe--
    made by/so many different/hands...
    /molded into a shell/an animal/a spirit
    vengeful/and/treacherous
"Goddammit" from the stern
when we/swirl back/into the current
to be taken away
/and see trees flash by like saviours/
we pull and pull/and pull
but are taken on
down into the rapids/that build into a
white/forest of hands/grasping hands

    and/
the river/soaks our/safety in contempt
    /sprays it back/in our/faces
    at the entrance to its soul/and fire spurts out

    then rushes us/further
    and/
capsizes our canoe/swamps
us and/leeches/into our clothes
/hair and skin and/boots
and closes over us like night

we're coughed up on the bank
and left to dry/while/the river keeps/changing

but we've taken back part of the river

and when it dries out of our clothes
it
will be dead to us forever

I think that was the best thing he wrote that year. But he wrote several very fine pieces, and he pushed me to write. But the most important result from this experience of sharing poetry was Jimmy's growing confidence in himself as a writer. He was

always too shy to read his writings aloud in class, and would not do that even in a small group. But he and a few other talented writers from that same class started a literary magazine that year (they let some of us teachers help with it). And they sought out and published other writers in the school. That magazine, student-operated and student-supported, remains a going concern in the school.

Jimmy is now a student at the University of the South, and this year he published his first poems in a little magazine. He is on his way as a writer. I feel good about that.

Like Jimmy, your talented student poets may be shy and reluctant at first to share what they write. Gently push them to publish--first in the class, then in the school if you have a literary magazine, and finally the harsh world of the Writer's market place. The good student poet needs to become aware of his audience and to expand that audience. Your job is to show him how.

Whenever possible, write and share and revise your own poetry with your good student poets. If you are sensitive about someone else seeing what you write, think how vulnerable your students must feel. There is no substitute for it. Grow a tougher hide if you have to, but write and share your poetry with them.

The good student poets can and should be encouraged to use models from the best poetry in their literary heritage. They need to read widely, especially in the modern poets, and they need to try those forms that appeal to them. James Dickey, Robert Lowell, Richard Brautigan--these and other divergent poets can be seen reflected in Jimmy's poetry.

Give them room to experiment. The journal, of course, is the poet's best tool--and best teacher. Encourage them to play around with the intricacies of meter and rhyme scheme, with the complexities of free verse forms, with the beauties of metaphor and imagery. Originality often is not as important as exploration, and an interesting failure is more valuable than a dull polished draft. But the good student poet also deserves to have demands made upon him. Every once in a while insist that he choose his best, revise it, and publish it.

And watch out for that quiet, shy kid in the back of the room. Write him a poem of your own in his journal some late afternoon. It may be an interesting year.

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PAPERBACK REVIEW

Mischling, Second Degree, by Ilse Koehn.
Bantam, 1978. 213 pp. $1.95.

This is Ilse Koehn's vivid remembrance of her childhood spent as a part of Hitler's Youth Movement, and more dramatically, of the dangerous secret kept from her until the war's end: Ilse was a "Mischling, second degree" (a person having one Jewish grandparent) and thus subject to all the penalties encumbent on a Jew. Aside from the obvious irony of a Jew wearing a Swastika armband, the book abounds in ironic situations--some funny, others tragic, but all proving that survival is often just a matter of inches. For example: for safety, Ilse and other ten- to fourteen-year-olds are sent to Czechoslovakia and thereupon become the targets of Czech snipers. Perhaps the most tragic irony occurs when Ilse's grandmother dies in a Theresienstadt concentration camp as Ilse is being groomed to be a Youth leader. Although young Ilse had my sympathy throughout the book as she tried to adjust to her increasingly more chaotic world, somehow I found myself disagreeing with those who hailed this book as another "Anne Frank." Mischling lacks the latter's depth and literary quality, but it can be appreciated for what it is--an incisive look, through a young girl's eyes, at a world gone mad. The vocabulary and interest level are suitable for middle-schoolers.

Reviewed by Barbara Guerra, Martin Kellogg Middle School, Newington, CT.

PAPERBACK REVIEW

Summer of the Monkeys by Wilson Rawls.
Dell, 1977. 283 pp. $1.50.

This is an adventure story presented in a mixture of history, a journey from childhood to adolescence, and the discovery of miracles laced in mountain folklore. As an historical novel, its strength lies in comparisons: those between life, work, and people in the 19th and 20th centuries. The plot moves fast enough to take the reader through the time gap and place him in a land where twenty miles is a vast distance and little girls remain crippled for lack of funds. There are a few historical rough spots in descriptions of 20th century items such as tinfoil and Tarzan novels, but they drift into the magic of childhood. Written in the first person using the child's honest and perceptive voice, the book provides an excellent study of literary devices for junior high readers. There are many examples of alliteration and imagery as well as varying usage of rhythm and dialect. A sensitive book that is capable of bringing the reader to laughter, tears, and some understandings about growing up, its major value lies in the author's ability to combine a monkey-filled sycamore tree with good literary technique.

Reviewed by Sharyn C. Nelson, Westbrook, CT.

A-Poem-A-Day Can Make a Difference!

Jane B. Matanzo and John Madison

"The poems were exciting and when somebody asks me what a poem is, I think I can tell them."

"Last year poetry just sounded like a bunch of words. This year it's funner."

"My feelings feel different when I hear poems now."

What happens, if anything, to the attitudes of students toward poetry if teachers spend five to ten minutes a day for one month presenting poetry to third, fourth, and fifth graders? The responses given above are representative of statements made by more than 1,000 such students after participating in just such a program.

Teachers of the English language arts generally agree that poetry should be included in the planned literary experiences of learners. Just what to include, however, has been the subject of much concern and some investigation. Four aspects of this topic were surveyed and discussed to provide background for the organization of a study involving the daily use of poetry. They were 1) attitudes of preservice and inservice teachers, 2) recent trends in publishing, 3) content of preplanned curricula, and 4) attitudes and knowledge demonstrated by students in grades three through five.

Historically, the presenters (teachers) of poetry and the activities associated with poetry receive much of the blame for apathy and alienation felt by learners. As part of the background for the program, several hundred teacher education students were surveyed regarding their attitudes and recollections regarding school experiences related to poetry. Three distinct types of responses emerged. The largest group was apathetic, had little recollection of poetry as part of their schooling, or remembered nothing in terms of poetry experiences. The second group expressed strong negative feelings and cited such things as memorization, embarrassment with recitation, and frustration with critical analysis as causes for alienation. The third and smallest group reported positive experiences in elementary and high schools, and many indicated that they select the reading of poetry as a leisure activity.

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The recent trends in publishing poetry materials particularly available to classroom teachers reveal an interesting direction. These offerings, exemplified by such authorities as Kenneth Koch, Wishes, Lies, and Dreams,[1] and Barbara Esbensen, A Celebration of Bees,[2] suggest, more often than not, that the responses of children to poetry take the form of composing or artistic expression. Much emphasis also is placed on the composing of Asian forms (haiku, senyru, tanka) and formula poems (diamante, cinquain). Although these types of responses, if they are successful, can be perceived as valid, they logically lead to an appreciation of composing and not necessarily to an appreciation of poetry itself.

In a survey of representative language arts curriculum guides from ten states, it was noted that if poetry appears at all in the materials for intermediate grades, it most often takes the form of a bibliography of poems related to topics, holidays, or seasons. This is supported by Charlotte Huck who surveyed curriculum guides in the area of literature for children. She suggests that the "majority of elementary schools in the United States have no planned literature programs."[3]

Studies have been conducted periodically since the 1920's which report on the types of poetry children prefer. The results are consistent. Children enjoy hearing narrative poetry, humorous poetry, and poems containing rhyme and rhythm. One study found that children dislike poems containing much figurative language and imagery and preferred contemporary poems to traditional poems.

With this information, a project involving the administration of pre- and post-questionnaires to 1,123 third, fourth, and fifth graders and a four week program of a "poem-a-day" was developed.

PROGRAM

A daily schedule of poetry was organized for each school day during the month of October. A general presentation format was prepared for each selected poem. The format generally consisted of directions before reading the poem, directions for introducing the poem to students, a copy of the poem, and suggested extension activities. Most extension activities were designed to create minimal additional work or class time for the participating teacher. It should be noted that our primary objective was to share poetry in a motivating way with students. Therefore, such suggestions were offered as optional. Throughout the project, a majority of the teachers implemented more than 60% of the suggested extenders.

Two examples of the daily poetry packet given teachers are presented below. The poems selected for the projects varied from general, nature, humorous poetry to poetry featuring an Autumnal or Halloween theme. A bibliography of the poems and poets included in the prepared packet appears at the completion of this article.

October 24 (Tuesday) Poem #11

Write the numerals one to seven on the board or an overhead transparency in the manner shown next to the poem below. You can use a single rather than a double line if you wish.

Directions to students: "Let's read the numbers together 0.....7. (Point to the zero.) If this were not a zero, what could it be? (Doughnut, 50¢ piece, etc.) "Look carefully at each numeral. You may talk to one or two students near you. Make a list of all the 'other' things each numeral could be." (After approx. 3 minutes of brainstorming, you might write "other" suggestions made by the students next to each numeral.)

"I have a poem today by May Swenson from her book, Poems to Solve. Listen to what she thinks each numeral looks like." (Read poem.)

CARDINAL IDEOGRAMS*

A mouth. Can blow or breathe,
be funnel, or hello.

A grass blade or a cut.

A question seated. And a proud
bird's neck.

Shallow mitten for two-fingered hand.

Three-cornered hat on one stilt.
Sometimes built so the roof gapes.

A policeman. Polite.
Wearing visored cap.

O unrolling,
tape of ambiguous length
on which is written the mystery
of everything curly.

A step,
detached from its stair.

May Swenson

Suggested Extension Activities.

1. You may want to read poem again more slowly so class can think carefully about Swenson's ideas and perhaps draw her perceptions.

2. Put other number combinations (9, 15, 55, etc.) and/or

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alphabet letters on the board. Let students create "objects" from these symbols.

3. Read the remainder of the poem from Swenson's book. Brainstorm other examples for the additional numbers she uses.

October 27 (Friday) Poem #14

Directions: Look at students in a very serious, quiet manner. Pause, then say: "Shhhhhhhhh." (Put finger to mouth.) "Shhhhhhhhh!" (Do this several more times very dramatically trying to circulate among the students.) "Oh my goodness--LOOK at me QUICKLY! Don't, DON'T, whatever you do, DON'T LOOK BEHIND YOU! Shhhhhh! Shhhhhh!"

Read poem:

THE WORST*

When singing songs of scariness,
Of bloodiness and hairyness,
I feel obligated at this moment to remind you
Of the most ferocious beast of all:
Three thousand pounds and nine feet tall--
The Glurpy Slurpy Skakagrall-- (pause)
Who's standing right behind you.

Shel Silverstein

And that is the poem entitled "The Worst" by Shel Silverstein.

Suggested Extension Activities.

1. Encourage individuals or reading groups to invent their own "Worst" and write a description of it. The description could be in rhyme, free verse, or prose.

2. Have a "Worst" Corner where collages, papier mache likenesses, drawings, etc. can be brought in on Monday and be paraded on Halloween. If time allows, they might be able to make their "Worsts" in school with available art materials. This could be a party project.

3. Share a secret. Have students pair off and "whisper creepily" descriptions of their "Worsts" to each other. This might be a special pre-Halloween treat!

FINDINGS

Prior to presenting the poetry packet to teachers, the

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*"The Worst" from Where the Sidewalk Ends. (c) 1974 by Shel Silverstein. Harper & Row.

poetry attitude of the participating 1,123 students and their perceptions of the poetry practices currently implemented in their respective third, fourth, and fifth grade classrooms were assessed. This assessment was accomplished by administering pre- and post-questionnaires to each student.

Student questionnaire responses. Students perceived teachers as reading poetry ONCE IN A WHILE in their pre-questionnaire responses. This perception was expressed by 69% of the third graders, 68% of the fourth graders, and 74% of the fifth graders.* The percentages for a teacher reading poetry MOST OF THE TIME or NOT AT ALL fluctuated similarly between 11% and 19% for the three grade levels. Hence, prior to this project, poetry was included in a majority of the 45 classrooms on an irregular, "once-in-a-while" basis.

When students were asked prior to the project if they selected poetry as part of their personal reading, an overwhelming majority of students at each grade level, 68%, 76%, and 78% responded NO!

On the pre-questionnaire students also were asked if they could remember three poems or tell what they were about. NO RESPONSE was made by 37%, 48%, and 53% of the students. A markedly few students, 11%, 5%, and 3% could name three poems or describe them with accuracy. When asked to write the names of poets, NO RESPONSE again predominated as 78%, 91%, and 88% of the students did NOT name a single poet! Of the names given, there was a range from friends and teachers to book characters, fiction and fantasy writers to poets such as Kipling, Browning, Aldis, Tennyson, Fisher, Frost, Milne, Poe, Silverstein, Stevenson, Longfellow, Dickinson, Dunbar, Ciardi, Cummings, O'Neill, McCord, Seuss, Wynne, and Lear.

Another question asked students prior to being exposed to the poetry packet was "When you hear the word, poetry, what is the first thing you think of?" Matching or corresponding responses were given about 1% of the time for all grade levels and included such answers as "Poem(s)," "rhyme(s), (-ing)," "story," "books," "happiness," "nothing," "poet," "reading," "writing," "animals," "beautiful," "icky," "people," and "words." Singular responses covered the gamut from "nice things," "a warm summer day," "nature," "couplets and illiteration," "exaggeration," and "entertainment" to "sleep," "spaced out," "stinky stuff," "boring," "don't like it," "short," "work," "vowels," and "I hate it."

After the completion of the poetry packet, students responded to a post-questionnaire. When asked if they felt any differently about poetry now than before being read the poems, YES was the majority reply of 58%, 68%, and 59% of the students.

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*Future percentages will be given respectively in the order of third, fourth, and fifth grade responses unless noted otherwise.

The words used to describe their present feelings were consistently positive and included such comments as "I wish you had more (poems)," "I never heard poems I liked before," and "I feel more imaginative."

When asked if they enjoyed hearing the poems read, 56%, 49%, and 48% respectively circled ALWAYS. With the exception of six students who circled NEVER, the remaining students circled SOMETIMES.

The students were then queried if they liked doing activities after the poems were read. The consistently enthusiastic responses showed 89%, 82%, and 86% of the students circling YES!

After participating in the project, 91%, 92%, and 87% of the students were able to name three poems. The name of the poet often accompanied the title. This is a reversal of the degree of poetry knowledge they demonstrated prior to the project.

When asked if they would like to have their teacher(s) read more poems to the class, the responses were categorized as follows:

Grade	Every Day	Once a Week	Sometimes	Never
Third grade	65%	19%	13%	3%
Fourth grade	67%	12%	18%	3%
Fifth grade	50%	23%	23%	4%

SUMMARY

After being exposed to poetry daily for a one month period, third, fourth, and fifth grade students expressed a more positive attitude toward poetry. In many instances, students seemed surprised that poetry could be "fun." They remembered names of poems and poets. Again, the exposure was fresh, and to be most fair in our final appraisal, an assessment after a greater time lapse should be administered.

A sizeable percentage of the students at all three grade levels enjoyed their participation in a variety of the Suggested Extension Activities. A comment made by a majority of their teachers was that the students often requested a longer time to do "more with the poems."

A minimum of 50% of the students responded they would like to be read a poem a day. An extreme low percentage of responses voted for the absence of poetry in their respective classrooms.

Daily exposure to a variety of poetry for a one month period may not make a permanent difference in poetry attitudes or

practices. However, the extreme enthusiasm and acceptance of a planned program such as that organized for this project prompts us to suggest that such permanency is a possibility. The audience for poetry does exist. The instant enthusiasm and the numerous requests made by the students for more poems was sincere. It is our premise that if such poetry practices as we initiated were continued with consistency, poetry would have a habitual place in the curriculum and among the readings selected by students.

The most authentic summary of this project is capsulized by several of the participating students:

> "I think poems should be on the kid's page of the Wednesday newspaper!"
>
> "I pick poems for free reading now!"
>
> And in rememberance of Shel Silverstein's "Boa Constrictor," one student declared, "I wish I was the snake!"

There is little doubt in our minds--that student WAS THE SNAKE!

FOOTNOTES

1. Kenneth Koch, Wishes, Lies, and Dreams: Teaching Children To Write Poetry, New York: Random House, 1971.

2. Barbara Esbensen, A Celebration of Bees: Helping Children Write Poetry, New York: Winston Press, 1975.

3. Charlotte Huck, Children's Literature in the Elementary School, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976, pp. 704, 328.

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Bodecker, N.M., Hurry, Hurry Mary Dear and other Nonsense Poems. New York: Atheneum, 1976. Poem used was "The Hat, the Gown, and the Ring."

Cole, William. Oh, What Nonsense! New York: The Viking Press, 1966. Poem used was "The Folk Who Live in Backward Town" by Mary Ann Hoberman.

deRegniers, Beatrice Schenck. Poems Children Will Sit Still For. New York: Scholastic Press, 1969. Poem used was "What in the World" by Eve Merriam.

Hill, Perkins, and Helbig, Straight On Till Morning, Poems of the Imaginary World. New York: Thomas Crowell, 1977. Poem used was "The Hare and the Tortoise" by Ian Serraillier.

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Hopkins, Lee Bennett. Pick-A-Peck-O-Poems. Indianapolis: Miller-Brody Productions, 1972. Poems used were "The House at The Corner" by Myra Cohn Livingston and "As Long As There's Weather" by Tamara Kitt.

McCord, David. One At A Time. Boston: Little, Brown, 1977. Poem used was "LMTL."

Ness, Evaline. Amelia Mixed The Mustard and Other Poems. New York: Scribners, 1975. Poems used were "Adventure of Isabel" by Ogden Nash and "Eat-It-All-Elaine" by Kaye Starbird.

Petitt, Dorothy. Poems To Remember. New York: Macmillan, 1967. Poem used was "Dinky" by Theodore Roethke.

Prelutsky, Jack. It's Halloween. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1977. Poem used was "Skeleton Parade."

Silverstein, Shel. Where The Sidewalk Ends. New York: Harper and Row, 1974. Poems used were "Band-Aids," "Boa-Constrictor," "Traffic Light," "Hector The Collector," and "The Worst."

Starbird, Kaye. Don't Ever Cross A Crocodile. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1963. Poem used was "Tuesday I Was Ten."

Wilbur, Richard. Opposites. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973. Poem used was "Opposites."

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

The CEJ will focus on two specialized topics during the 1979-80 school year. We invite you to submit descriptions of programs, lists of resources, summaries of research, or just ideas about any aspect of the topics. If you are considering writing something for either issue, please send a brief statement of your intended topic to the editor no later than May 1 so that we can avoid duplication and also be in touch with you before summer vacation.

Fall 1979 issue: THE HEARD WORD--SPEAKING, LISTENING, DRAMATICS

The oral aspect of English usually gets short shrift in the language arts classes. What do English teachers need to know about oral communications? How does one bring a play from the page to the stage? How do you teach rowdy junior high kids to listen to each other? What is the role of improvisational drama? Do public speaking and debate have the same place in the curriculum as they did fifty years ago? What information does human interaction research offer us for improving discussions in our classes? How can we best integrate oral activities with reading and writing? What about creative dramatics? Is oral reading really of any value? And what about the roles of radio, television, and music--what place should they have in an English curriculum?

Spring 1980 issue: TEACHING ENGLISH TO THE "HANDICAPPED"

In heterogeneous English classes, how can teachers handle blind or deaf students? What kind of arrangements must be made for physically handicapped students--those who cannot write or speak? How do you teach writing skills, grammar, literature, etc. to special education students, to EMR students, to students with unspecified learning disabilities? What academic and social problems are there for other students in the English classes when students with special needs are integrated into the mainstream? What English materials are most helpful for special students? How do you handle IEPs efficiently? What novels and classroom activities might help "normal" students better understand the problems of special students? To what human and library resources can English teachers go for help in teaching students with specialized needs?

If you have something to say about these or other related topics, please send your manuscript--double-spaced and accompanied by a self-addressed large envelope with sufficient return postage clipped (not glued) to it--to the editor by August 1 for the fall issue or by January 15, 1980 for the spring issue.